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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

BY GEORGE McLEAN HARPER

PROFESSOR IN PRINCETON UNIVERSITY; AUTHOR OF
"MASTERS OF FRENCH LITERATURE" AND A "LIFE OF CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE"

"A man of uncommon genius is a man of high passions and lofty design."—WILLIAM GODWIN

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* I wish to express my thanks to the Hon. Ferdinand Jelke, of Cincinnati, for a copy of this picture.

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

CHAPTER XVIII

HAPPINESS AND WORK

COLERIDGE was probably taking mere idle talk for a serious project, when he wrote to Humphry Davy, on February 3, 1801, that the Wordsworths were thinking of leaving Town-end:*

"A gentleman resident here [Keswick], his name Calvert, an idle, good-hearted, and ingenious man, has a great desire to commence fellow-student with me and Wordsworth in chemistry. He is an intimate friend of Wordsworth's, and he has proposed to W. to take a house which he (Calvert) has nearly built, called Windy Brow, in a delicious situation, scarce half a mile from Greta Hall, the residence of S. T. Coleridge, Esq., and so for him (Calvert) to live with them—that is, Wordsworth and his sister. In this case he means to build a little laboratory, etc. Wordsworth has not quite decided, but is strongly inclined to adopt the scheme, because he and his sister have before lived with Calvert on the same footing, and are much attached to him."

On March 16, 1801, Coleridge writes to Poole† that he has "completely extricated the notions of time and space," and "overthrown the doctrine of association as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels—especially the doctrine of necessity"; he had been engaged in deducing all the five senses from one sense and stating their growth and the causes of their difference, but had desisted "at

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 345. † *Ibid.*, 348.

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Wordsworth's advice, or, rather, fervent entreaty." The fever of his mind had reached such a pitch as to alarm his friend, and he would therefore take a week's respite and prepare "Christabel" for the press. He adds: "You have seen, I hope, the Lyrical Ballads. In the divine poem called Michael, by an infamous blunder of the printer, near twenty lines are omitted in page 210, which makes it nearly unintelligible. Wordsworth means to write to you and to send them together with a list of the numerous errata. The character of the Lyrical Ballads is very great, and will increase daily. They have extolled them in the British Critic."

A week later he unfolds his philosophical projects more fully to the same correspondent, adding:* "I assure you, solemnly assure you, that you and Wordsworth are the only men on earth to whom I would have uttered a word on this subject." He is "oppressed with a heart-gnawing melancholy" at the thought of the poverty and famine that afflict England, and is convinced that bad government is the cause. "God knows," he cries, "it is as much as I can do to put meat and bread on my own table, and hourly some poor starving wretch comes to my door to put in his claim for part of it." We must remember that he describes the time when the lamentable era of industrial expansion was coming in. "Dear Poole," he exclaims, "it is our pestilent commerce, our unnatural crowding together of men in cities, and our government by rich men, that are bringing about the manifestations of offended Deity." He would like to go and settle near Priestley, in America: "I say I would go to America if Wordsworth would go with me, and we could persuade two or three farmers of this country, who are exceedingly attached to us, to accompany us."

Poole, in reply, describes the effects of hunger and unrest in Devonshire, Cornwall, and Somerset. He has no time, being busy alleviating the wants of his neighbours, to express at large his opinions of the preface

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 350.

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and the new volume of "Lyrical Ballads," but says:* "Remember me kindly to Wordsworth. Tell him he is not only the best, but will soon be the most popular poet of his age." With unfailing patience Poole encouraged and advised poor suffering Coleridge through this period of intense physical pain and intellectual ferment. He sent him money, never too much at a time, and always opportunely. Another project, conceived in a far more joyous vein, was opened to Southey upon his return from Lisbon to Bristol. Mr. Pinney had a country-house on the island of Nevis in the West Indies, situated of course "in a most heavenly way." Why not receive an offer of that mansion, and a sinecure, and go there with nothing to do but write poetry? "Now I and my family, and you and Edith, and Wordsworth and his sister, might all go there, and make the Island more illustrious than Cos or Lesbos. . . . Wordsworth would certainly go if I went. By the living God, it is my opinion that we should not leave three such men behind us."†

The intimacy of the various families which composed the Grasmere-Keswick circle is better shown by a fact than by this tall talk—the fact, namely, that Coleridge was at this time staying near Durham, at the house of George Hutchinson, a brother of Tom and Mary and Joanna, and that their sister Sara was there too. Coleridge, all aflame with zeal to accomplish several great tasks in philosophy, any one of which would have taken a lifetime, was reading the works of Duns Scotus—and what not besides—from the cathedral library, whose custodians appear to have been surprised out of their senses by the demands of such a reader and for such books. He was in one of his periods of most intense intellectual agitation, his ill-health abominable, his pain mysterious and acute. As usual, his affectionate nature had secured him a home with friends or friends' friends. Perhaps he had fled from the Wordsworths to avoid witnessing their anxiety. They were very anxious

* "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 43.

† E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 359.

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about him. Wordsworth in great distress had written to Poole a month before, suggesting that this faithful friend should lend Coleridge money enough to go to the Azores. The loan should be made in such a way as not to hang on the sick man's mind.* Poole, as Mrs. Sanford has shown, sent his answer directly to Coleridge,† refusing, for some good reason no doubt, to advance the entire sum, but offering to give his share if others would help. Coleridge was offended by Poole's letter, though it is difficult to see why, and lapsed into a silence which was not broken until September. Then he wrote reproachfully to his old friend, and included Wordsworth in his censure.‡ The references to Wordsworth are as follows:

"I have such an utter dislike to all indirect ways of going about anything, that when Wordsworth mentioned his design of writing to you, but would not explain to me, even by a hint, what he meant to write, I felt a great repugnance to the idea, which was suppressed by my habitual deference to his excellent good sense. He wrote without knowing you or your circumstances, your habitual associations in the whole growth of your mind, or the accidental impressions of disgust made by your many losses and the squandering of your exertions on objects that had proved themselves unworthy of them. It is impossible that you should feel, as to pecuniary affairs, as Wordsworth or as I feel—or even as men greatly inferior to you in all other things that make man a noble being. . . . In all my afflictions I never dreamt, however, for a moment, of making such an application to you as Wordsworth did. He acted erroneously, wrongly; for you, I understand, had requested him to write to you freely on all that, in his opinion, concerned my welfare."

This is one of the rare occasions on which Coleridge lapsed from his characteristic considerateness and generosity. Poole was deeply wounded, but the interchange of several long explanatory letters at last restored his feelings to their natural state.

The only original poems which Wordsworth is known

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 142.

† "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 52. ‡ *Ibid.*, 63.

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to have completed in 1801 are the sonnets "Pelion and Ossa flourish side by side" and "There is a little unpretending rill," and the exquisite lines called "The Sparrow's Nest," which conclude with his famous tribute to his sister. A delicate instinct of reserve forbade him to use her real name. He spent much time this year rewriting Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale," "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale," and "Troilus and Cresida," changing the language of the original only so far, he tells us, as was "necessary for the fluent reading and instant understanding of the Author." These attempts were probably made in order to prove to the world that the language of daily intercourse common to men was a satisfactory medium for poetic expression. Apart from this reason, his effort can hardly be said to have been justified. The language of Chaucer is not yet too archaic to be read fluently and understood instantly by any educated person who will take a little pains; and to make slight changes here and there is to disturb the charm of his learned simplicity. Perhaps, however, Wordsworth was moved by the generous purpose of really popularizing these poems, making them available, that is, for uneducated readers. In that case his efforts could be more readily justified.

From three chance allusions which occur in Dorothy Wordsworth's "Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland in 1803," it is evident that her brother visited that country in the late summer of 1801. No direct reference to this fact is made by Bishop Wordsworth in the "Memoirs," although, inadvertently perhaps, he quotes two of the passages from his aunt's "Recollections" which testify to it.*

The occasion of Wordsworth's first visit to Scotland was the second marriage of his friend Basil Montagu, which took place in Glasgow, September 6, 1801. The bride was Laura, eldest daughter of Sir William Beau-

* One of these ("Memoirs," I. 215) is not to be found in Knight's edition of the "Recollections," nor in Shairp's. The other is in the "Memoirs," I. 224. In Knight's edition of Dorothy's "Journals" the allusions occur in Vol. I., pp. 187 and 202, and the omitted passage should follow the word "stunted" on p. 165.

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maurice Rush, of Royden, Suffolk, and Wimbledon House, Surrey.* From the passages mentioned above, it appears that Wordsworth travelled to Glasgow with Sir William Rush's family, passing through Longtown and Dumfries, and visiting the Duke of Hamilton's house at Hamilton.†

As we have seen, Wordsworth composed much less poetry in 1801 than in any of the preceding three years, which had been amazingly productive. The first two books of "The Prelude" are thought to have been completed before the end of 1800. There is a tradition, which I have heard from the lips of Henry J. Roby, the late occupant of Lancrigg, an estate that lies in a part of Easedale much haunted by the poet and his sister, that Wordsworth dictated them to her while he paced up and down a still-existing path.‡ There is internal evidence, but, so far as I know, nothing more, to indicate that the great fragment of "The Recluse," first printed in 1888, was composed in 1800. It is hard to see why these noble verses were so long withheld from the public. I cannot agree with Professor Kinght that their suppression showed "true critical insight." Unequal in

* *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXI., p. 859.

† Through the kindness of Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, I am able to add the missing link to this chain of evidence. It is an unpublished portion of a letter from Coleridge to Poole, of September 7, 1801. Other parts of the letter were printed by Mrs. Sandford in "Thomas Poole and his Friends." Coleridge says: "Wordsworth is gone into Scotland to the Scotch Lakes with Sir William and Lady Rush and their six daughters—to the eldest of whom Montagu (who is with them) was to have been married on Thursday last at Edinburgh, and was so, I suppose. She is a fine girl, only 18." Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge adds: "I do not doubt that it was then that Wordsworth wrote the lines, 'Written in a Grotto'—'O Moon, if e'er I joyed'—published in *Morning Post*, March 9, 1802, and Knight's Eversley Edition, VIII., pp. 234-5." Though there are features of this poem which have caused editors to doubt that Wordsworth was its author, and he did not publish it among his works, it appears plainly to have been his when one compares its imagery and certain of its verbal peculiarities with two other poems to the Moon, written by him in 1835. In this connection I may add that Mr. E. H. Coleridge has kindly permitted me to say that Basil Montagu was mainly instrumental in procuring for S. T. Coleridge his honorarium as Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Miss Rush was the second of Montagu's three wives.

‡ Mr. Roby planted an Irish yew to mark the spot where Dorothy sat

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quality they no doubt are, but there is more than ample compensation for this in the deep inwardness of certain lines, the magnificence of others, and the glorious climax. Milton at his highest pitch, in the opening of the third and seventh books of "Paradise Lost," is followed with vigorous wing by his disciple in the lines:

> Urania, I shall need
> Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such
> Descend on earth or dwell in highest heaven!
> For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
> Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
> To which the heaven of heavens is but a vale.
> All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
> That ever was put forth in personal form—
> Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
> Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
> I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
> The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
> Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
> By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
> As fall upon us often when we look
> Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
> My haunt, and the main region of my song.

And a moment later, remembering the lamentable conditions of actual life that force themselves upon a spirit which would fain dwell in the high realms of speculation, he sings, in Miltonic music, and with a wider sympathy with the realities of human fate than Milton ever uttered:

> Such grateful haunts forgoing, if I oft
> Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes
> And fellowships of men, and see ill sights
> Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
> Must hear Humanity in fields and groves
> Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
> Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
> Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities—may these sounds
> Have their authentic comment; that even these
> Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn.

Wordsworth's own reason for setting aside "The Recluse" until his death, when he intended that "The Prelude" should be published, is plain enough. The

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two are closely connected, and he still hoped to complete the entire "edifice" of which they were to form parts. A temporary subsidence of creative power in 1801, his marriage and other events in 1802, and an impulse to write on local and patriotic subjects which seized him in 1803, caused him to lay aside "The Prelude" until the following year. He found time, however, even in 1802, to compose much of the first two books of "The Excursion," and we may at least conjecture that a change in his feeling towards Coleridge led him to cease work upon the great poem dedicated to his friend. Moreover—and this is a fact upon which due emphasis has never been laid—Wordsworth's political sentiments were still unsettled, and it was impossible for him to proceed, at such a time, with a poem so deeply concerned with politics as "The Prelude." The antagonism between his Revolutionary hopes and his patriotism had by no means come to an end. Had he not still retained some of his old sympathy with France, he could not have admired Fox, he could hardly even have kept in friendly relations with Poole. Preliminaries of peace were signed, on October 1, 1801, in terms on the whole disadvantageous to England.* France was allowed to retain most of her conquests in Europe. The republics founded by France were recognized. The wars of the Revolution appeared to have come to an end; and we must remember that it was the wars of the Revolution, rather than the principles of the Revolution, that distressed Wordsworth. A great philosophical and cosmopolitan movement had degenerated into an appeal to national feeling, into a lust for conquest. This process seemed at last to have been checked, at whatever cost to his own country. His rapidly diminishing faith in the Revolution must have revived a little. His disillusionment was delayed for a year.

* In spite of the victory of Aboukir and the evacuation of Egypt by the French, Great Britain was so anxious for peace that she abandoned all her conquests except Ceylon and Trinidad, restoring to the Dutch even the Cape of Good Hope, the stopping-place on the way to India. Pitt acknowledged his reluctance to make this concession, though glad enough that "the long suspense was at length terminated" (Letter to Lord

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Fox was reported in *The Morning Chronicle* of October 12 to have said, in a speech at the Shakespeare Tavern, that the peace was glorious to the French Republic, that Britain had not gained the object of the war, and that he himself was delighted with this result.* Such feelings were not confined to men of Fox's breadth of view. When Napoleon's aide-de-camp arrived in London with the ratification of the preliminary articles, a large multitude escorted his carriage, took off the horses, and drew him in triumph through the streets.†

When the treaty of Amiens was finally concluded, in March, 1802, Thomas Poole immediately began to prepare for a visit to the country which had so long provoked his curiosity and aroused his sympathy. A few weeks later he was in Paris, calling on Thomas Paine and on Helen Maria Williams, the Godwinian novelist and Girondist.‡ The peace lasted till May, 1803. During this time Wordsworth, as we shall see, availed himself also of the opportunity to visit France. In the interval, however, it was made plain to him, as to almost all the world, that Napoleon was faithless to the Revolution, and that he had reduced France to bondage. In August, 1802, the tyrant was made Consul for life, with power to appoint his successor. Immediately there was a change for the worse in French foreign policy. The new Italian "republics" were transformed into satrapies; "agitations" in Switzerland were allayed by a French army; "the chaos of Germany," as Victor Duruy puts it with perhaps unconscious irony,§ "was simplified" by giving church and municipal property into the hands of princes subservient to the conqueror. An attempt was made to recover Santo Domingo. The French brought back nothing except

Mulgrave, of October 2, in Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," Vol. III., p. 352). "I cannot help regretting the Cape of Good Hope," he says in the same letter, "though I know many great authorities do not attach to it the same importance that I do. In other respects I think the treaty very advantageous, and on the whole satisfactory."

* Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," III. 357. † *Ibid.*, 355.

‡ "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 76-90.

§ "Histoire de France," II. 576.

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the heroic captive Toussaint l'Ouverture. There was no lack of provocation on either side, and in May, 1803, war between France and England broke out again. This time the very existence of Great Britain as an independent nation was threatened. And the menace came from an undisguised tyranny. We shall see that then the conflict of opposed sympathies in Wordsworth's mind was stilled; his duty stood out plain. A great epoch of his life came to an end. Although he continued to be a poet of political ideas, a poet of national and large social interests, the impulse of his thought was to flow henceforth from a different direction. For him the early nineteenth century, with its reactions, its panics, its distrust in rationalism, its backward-looking to the Middle Ages, its checking of the high-hearted Renaissance, began during the ominous pause that followed the treaty of Amiens, when "*ce siècle avait deux ans*." It was in a sense the negative side he went over to, the timid Tory side. Perhaps that was a more satisfactory choice than if he had thrown himself into the current of what was then deemed the progressive movement, the middle-class industrial movement, in which the clear and unimpaired strain of Revolutionary philosophy was scarcely to be recognized. High conservatism, with its historic background, and bold radicalism, with its appeal to the future, are both of them fit air for poets to breathe, but the thick and low-creeping atmosphere of a policy whose only object is to increase the wealth of a nation can only asphyxiate art of every kind.

For yet another reason, the year 1802 marked the end of old things and the beginning of new in the life of Wordsworth, for this year is a breathing-place in the march of English literature. One stage had just been finished; another was about to begin. The death of Erasmus Darwin, following close upon that of Cowper in 1800, Burke in 1797, and Burns in 1796, served to remind men that a great generation, with many sources of mutual understanding, had stopped at the threshold of the inn. Apart from Wordsworth and Coleridge, poetry at least seemed poorly represented in the company

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that was preparing to set forth again. Southey wrote "works," but failed to represent fresh ideas or to stimulate. He was, in spite of all his efforts, out of touch with life, and a notable example of how little mere literary industry avails unless the writer's heart is on fire with some kind of flame, infernal or divine. The slight performances of Thomas Moore were just what might have been expected in an interval between great acts of the intellectual drama. By the end of the year, it is true, a literary event of the utmost importance had occurred, but one the significance of which was not at that time readily grasped: Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" had begun to issue from the press. But "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," first of his poetical romances, was not to appear until three years later, and "Waverley" not till 1814. Crabbe was too old to make any really new poetical venture. Blake had written most of his Lays and Visions, and was henceforth to body forth his conceptions in design. It was a propitious moment for pronouncing an eloquent apology for poetry and uttering a fresh and arresting opinion on poetical technique. This Wordsworth had done, and now, when the political contradictions in his heart had ceased to torture him, he entered upon a new era of poetic productiveness.

There was another side to his life in the quiet year 1801—the idyllic. It is beautifully described in his sister's Journal. Her brief notes touch chiefly upon the infinite details of nature, her brother's work, her perfect love of him, and the mysterious depths of her affection for Coleridge. One learns from her what a boundless source of delight there is in the life of *things*. It is not merely that she happened to be dwelling in one of the loveliest and most varied regions in all the world; she would have discovered wonders anywhere. She had eyes to see and a soul to comprehend. Her curiosity was as intense as Gilbert White's of Selborne, though, of course, she had no scientific purpose or method. Love was her only impulse in all she did. There is an almost complete absence of the kind of reflection which is com-

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monly called "religious." She apparently felt no need of an historical revelation. She listened continually to a great theodicy. Her daily life was worship. In service to those about her, in sharing their burdens, lightening their cares, looking after their welfare and happiness, she found abundant exercise for her sense of duty. With self-control equal to her brother's, she refrained from speculating about what was most painful or inexplicable in her experience. There is hardly a phrase in her Journal that could be called sentimental, though of wild joy and of sorrow and disappointment the traces are not few. We prate about communion with nature and about the healing touch of nature. Here was a young woman of thirty who really sought and found companionship, strength, restoration, and joy, in nature. Sometimes the hand of conscious art is visible in what she writes; we perceive that she is making studies of scenes and incidents with a view to providing material for her brother. More often she puts down artlessly what she sees, for its own sake, as one instinctively plucks a beautiful spring flower.

Of her deliberate pictures, nothing could be more delicate in its union of quick observation with imaginative understanding, or more exquisite in literary form, than the following passage:

"*Tuesday, 24th* [*October*, 1801].—It was very windy, and we heard the wind everywhere about us as we went along the lane, but the walls sheltered us. . . . As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of 50 yards from our favourite birch-tree. It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The sun went in, and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch-trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a creature by its own self among them."

She gives us more than one instance of her brother's extreme sensitiveness to impressions. Here is some-

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thing he would have been too reticent to tell the world. One evening there came " bad news from poor C. [C. is always Coleridge]: William went to John's Grove. I went to find him. Moonlight, but it rained. . . . He had been surprised, and terrified, by a sudden rushing of winds, which seemed to bring earth, sky, and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him in. He was glad he was in the high road." More often it is the old story of his exhaustion after composing poetry, such as the record on December 23: " William worked at ' The Ruined Cottage ' and made himself very ill;" or later, on February 2, 1802: " William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm. . . . After tea I read aloud the eleventh book of ' Paradise Lost.' We were much impressed and also melted into tears. The papers came in soon after I had laid aside the book—a good thing for my Wm."

Her gift, perhaps unmatched outside Japan, of making a nature poem with the smallest possible number of words, can be seen in such a passage as this: "Attempted Fairfield [the great mountain behind Grasmere], but misty, and we went no further than Green Head Gill to the sheepfold; mild, misty, beautifully soft;" or this: " The snow hid all the grass, and all signs of vegetation, and the rocks showed themselves boldly everywhere and seemed more stony than rock or stone." She described minutely the travellers who stopped at their door or whom they met in the road, beggars, peddlers, gipsies, discharged sailors, and other wanderers. This, we feel sure, was done for William's sake.

Mary Hutchinson was a guest at Dove Cottage during almost the whole of the last three months of the year 1801, and part of that time her brother Tom was there too. Coleridge had his room there, coming without warning and departing with reluctance. But the restless fit was on him. He could never stay long with his family at Keswick, even when his friends were only fourteen miles away and he might visit them as long as he pleased. He was racked with physical pain and mental distress.

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The opium habit held him by this time tight in its clutches, and I have very little doubt Wordsworth, though perhaps no one else, knew what was the matter. He was ashamed of not making a better provision for his family. He was more than ashamed of not giving to the world a fuller harvest of his genius. He persuaded himself that in London, under the discipline of an engagement to furnish a daily article to some newspaper, he might recover command of his powers. And beyond London he pictured to himself the strong personality of Thomas Poole. And so, with money sent by Poole, he set out, November 10, on this desperate adventure. The Wordsworths understood its perils. They knew what anguish drove him forth, and how his loving heart would suffer the moment his back was turned. They knew how dependent he was upon such bodily comforts, such counsel, and such spiritual control, as they had been wont to give him. And they would miss him. On that day Dorothy wrote:

"Poor C. left us, and we came home together. We left Keswick at 2 o'clock, and did not arrive at Grasmere till 9 o'clock. I burnt myself with Coleridge's aquafortis. [He had been dabbling in chemistry, as much out of friendship with Davy as out of curiosity.] C. had a sweet day for his ride. Every sight and every sound reminded me of him—dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and by night, of all dear things. I was melancholy, and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping—'nervous blubbering,' says William. It is not so. Oh, how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him!"

Her solicitude never slept. Nearly every day she mentions writing to the absent friend or hearing from him.

November 11: "Put aside dearest C.'s letters." November 16: "I am going to write to Coleridge and Sara. Poor C.! I hope he was in London yesterday." November 20: "In the evening we had cheerful letters from Coleridge and Sara." November 21: "We walked in the morning, and paid one pound and 4d. for letters.

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William out of spirits."* November 22: "We wrote to Coleridge." November 24: "We had a note from Mrs. C., with bad news from poor C.—very ill." November 25: "I baked bread, and wrote to Sara Hutchinson and Coleridge." December 3: "I wrote a little bit of my letter to Coleridge." December 4: "I finished the letter to Coleridge, and we received a letter from him and Sara.† C.'s letter written in good spirits. A letter of Lamb's about George Dyer with it." December 6: "In the afternoon we sate by the fire: I read Chaucer aloud, and Mary read the first canto of 'The Fairy Queen.' After tea Mary and I walked to Ambleside for letters. . . . It was a sober starlight evening. The stars not shining as it were with all their brightness when they were visible, and sometimes hiding themselves behind small greying clouds, that passed soberly along. We opened C.'s letter at Wilcock's door. We thought we saw that he wrote in good spirits, so we came happily homewards, where we arrived 2 hours after we left home. It was a sad, melancholy letter, and prevented us all from sleeping."

The next day they rose by candlelight and set off in rain and snow to Keswick to see Mrs. Coleridge and the children, in order, doubtless, to be able to tell Coleridge how they were. This time they rode, and Dorothy was not too tired on her return to write to him late at night. December 9: "I finished a letter to C." On the 12th she and William and Mary went out together, and she noted: "The birches on the crags beautiful, red brown and glittering. The ashes glittering spears with their upright stems. The hips very beautiful, and so good! and, dear Coleridge! I ate twenty for thee when I was by myself. I came home first. They walked too slow for me." This is the only allusion she makes to

* No wonder! Postage, which was very high, was paid by the recipient, and was a heavy tax on intelligence. Some of the richest people enjoyed the franking privilege. Many peculiar circumstances in the correspondence of that time can be readily understood if we remember these facts. Coleridge suggested a computation of the domestic loss, the crippling of talent, and the injustice, occasioned by this unfair burden.

† This refers to Sara Hutchinson. It is to her, and not to Mrs. Coleridge, that the name is applied in the Journal, where she is often mentioned in connection with Coleridge. He, it would seem, wrote to her frequently at this time, and she passed his letters on to the Wordsworths.

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the love-affair going on before her eyes. Her innocent girlish action when she was by herself shows where her own heart was.

December 13: "The boy brought letters from Coleridge, and from Sara. Sara in bad spirits about C." December 14: "Wm. and Mary walked to Ambleside in the morning to buy mousetraps. . . . I wrote to Coleridge a very long letter while they were absent." December 18: "I wrote to Coleridge." "Monday, 21st, being the shortest day, Mary walked to Ambleside for letters. It was a wearisome walk, for the snow lay deep upon the roads, and it was beginning to thaw. I stayed at home. Wm. sate beside me, and read 'The Pedlar' [*i.e.*, part of "The Excursion"]. He was in good spirits, and full of hope of what he should do with it. He went to meet Mary, and they brought four letters—two from Coleridge, one from Sara, and one from France. Coleridge's were melancholy letters. He had been very ill. We were made very unhappy. Wm. wrote to him, and directed the letter into Somersetshire. I finished it after tea. In the afternoon Mary and I ironed." December 22: "We were very sad about Coleridge." December 23: "Mary wrote out the Tales from Chaucer for Coleridge." December 25: "*Christmas Day*. We received a letter from Coleridge. His letter made us uneasy about him. I was glad I was not by myself when I received it."* December 26: "Poor Coleridge, Sara, and dear little Derwent [Coleridge's child], here last year at this time. After tea we sate by the fire comfortably. I read aloud 'The Miller's Tale.' Wrote to Coleridge. . . . Wm. wrote part of the poem to Coleridge."†

On Monday, December 28, William, Mary, and Dorothy, set off on foot to Keswick with some cold mutton in their pockets. This they reinforced with roasted apples and the smell of Christmas pies at Wythburn Inn. They had been invited to visit Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist, who lived at Eusemere, at the northern end of Ullswater. Spending a night at

* This was her thirtieth birthday.

† Professor Knight conjectures, rather wildly I think, that this was the "Stanzas written in my Pocket Copy of Thomson's Castle of Indolence." "The Prelude" was probably meant.

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Greta Hall with Mrs. Coleridge and the children, they pushed ahead next day, looking back at " dear Coleridge's desert home," and thinking of him. Mary spent the next day with them at Mr. Clarkson's, and then went on to her relatives in Penrith, six miles farther, but returned on January 3 to bring letters from Sara and Coleridge. She was with the party again from the 17th to the 22nd. The Clarksons were an extremely friendly couple, Mrs. Clarkson having a fund of old-fashioned stories and being a woman of a very romantic and imaginative temperament. They dined sometimes with Thomas Wilkinson, a Quaker farmer, who had a small estate near Yanwath, on the road to Penrith. It was of him Wordsworth wrote several years afterward in the lines beginning " Spade ! with which Wilkinson hath tilled his lands." The poet's admiration for him was very great, and is only partly obscured by the solemn pharisaism of his remark to Miss Fenwick—made, it must be remembered, in his opinionated old age—that Wilkinson was " a quaker by religious profession; by natural constitution of mind—or, shall I venture to say, by God's grace? he was something better."

William and Dorothy returned to Grasmere, without Mary, on January 23, 1802. To anyone acquainted with Grisedale Pass, her record of the journey is full of interest. They set out on the same horse, accompanied by Mr. Clarkson, from whom they parted on the Ullswater side at one o'clock; and then, on foot, through rain and hail and snow, lost at times in the clouds, and guided by William's skill, which needed no visible track, they toiled on, till they reached a point whence they saw the vale of Grasmere, when the mists broke away, looking " soft and grave, of a yellow hue." At home, in their own snug nest, they gazed about them and felt that they were happy.

And thus ended a season of comparative unproductiveness for Wordsworth. We must remember that it included a great part of his courtship. His sister says nothing about this; it must have given her a mingled sense of unselfish pleasure and painful apprehension.

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She foresaw that the day of her felicity might be near its close.

Immediately on this return to his old home and to a life of entire seclusion with his sister, Wordsworth entered upon a period of ardent and successful composition, which lasted, with few and short interruptions, until 1807. Fully half of the published extracts from Dorothy's Journal were written in the one year 1802. We have, therefore, uncommonly full and accurate knowledge of the origins of the poems written in that year. In the case of no other great poet has the personal background of his work been so completely revealed—the incidents that suggested it, the purposes that inspired it, the methods that gave it form; for no other poet has had such a companion. The record begins with frequent statements that William was "tired with composition," a good sign, for it means that he was driven by inspiration. He was working at "The Excursion." One very noticeable deficiency in that poem—its lack of incident and of direct reference to men and events, either known to fame or buried in privateness—is easily explained when we observe how inward was the poet's life at this time. Coleridge did not return till March 19. In his absence there was no food for the mind in personal intercourse with any neighbour. They were on friendly terms with the humble folk who lived near them, the carters and carriers who passed their door, and the dwellers on remote farms. Every few days they helped some poor wayfarer plodding between the seacoast and the inland towns. They listened to the tale of distress, shared their plain meal with the hungry, and gave of their scanty money to the poor. Newspapers were few, and were carefully kept on file.

Occasionally, to Dorothy's relief, William "wasted his mind in the Magazines." They read little, however, except Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, if we may judge from her jottings. Jonson's short poems were "too interesting for him," she tells us, "and would not let him go to sleep." They dipped into a box of books that came from London, trying

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Fletcher and Thomas Fuller and Smollett. Dorothy studied German and attempted to translate (into verse, perhaps) some of Lessing's fables. She sometimes wrote snatches of poetry, but was dissatisfied with the result. Now and then came a " heart-rending letter from Coleridge." His growing estrangement from his wife was the more lamentable because she had no very positive faults and he was devoted to the children. No doubt, in his saddest letters he dwelt on this subject and on his health. It required infinite patience to receive his complaints with sympathy, and a boundless supply of energy to encourage and counsel him. To the outer world Wordsworth appeared in later life impassive. What strikes one most forcibly in reading his sister's Journal is the extreme sensibility of them both. A melancholy letter from their friend made them ill. Reading a fine passage in Milton melted them to tears.

William composed under demonic influence, and at such times Dorothy withdrew to suffer in silent fear. Her " apprehensions came in crowds." The intensity of his feelings was redoubled when they passed into her less robust heart. It has always been said by the Wordsworth family and their intimate friends—and I have heard it said myself by one who knew both her and her brother*—that the cause of her mental breakdown in later life was the physical strain she endured in taking long walks. Her outdoor life would seem rather to have preserved her from breaking down sooner, for it was inevitable that such quivering sympathies, such lively feelings, should play havoc. She never spared herself, and the truth is that her brother blindly allowed her not only to share his own intellectual pains, but to do too much of the humbler toil of copying his poems and writing his letters. In default of social dissipation, the only thing that preserved both him and her from complete prostration was constant bodily exercise, accompanied, as it was, with interest in the details of what they saw. She suffered, no doubt, from doing so much household work, too, in addition to long tramps

* Miss Arnold of Fox How.

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and the intense intellectual life she lived. Many a time, when wearied with mental exertion and exhausted from household business, she started for walks of many miles, but the walks themselves were the least part of the danger. The question of how far her spiritual balance was overthrown by the strain of controlling her feelings about Coleridge is too delicate to be discussed. What could be more affecting—or more alarming, the intensity of her nature considered—than her eager watching for his letters and the grief they usually called forth? Coming home one evening from the post-office at Ambleside or Rydal, she writes: "We broke the seal of Coleridge's letters, and I had light enough just to see that he was not ill. I put it in my pocket. At the top of the White Moss I took it to my bosom—a safer place for it."

Mary Hutchinson was still at Penrith. Her lover had not seen her for nearly a month, but one Sunday morning, February 14, "the fine day pushed him on to resolve," and after some persuasion, it seems, from his sister, "off he went in his blue spencer and a pair of new pantaloons fresh from London." He returned two days later, and "had only seen Mary H. for a couple of hours between Eamont Bridge and Hartshorn Tree." He brought back the story of "Alice Fell," which had been told him by Mr. Graham, a friend of Clarkson's, who "urged him to put it into verse for humanity's sake."* Dorothy at once wrote out the incident in full, and about a month later the poem was composed. Through January and February great pains were taken in revising and completing "Peter Bell." But "The Pedlar"—*i.e.*, "The Excursion"—was their main concern for many months, and a typical entry in the Journal is as follows: "I was so unlucky as to propose to rewrite 'The Pedlar.' Wm. got to work, and was worn to death."

On March 4 William Calvert sent a servant with horses, and Wordsworth went to Keswick for a visit of several days, leaving a supply of fresh pens and some poems

* Fenwick note.

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put in order for writing by his faithful amanuensis. His back was no sooner turned than she began to long for him. "I *will* be busy," she writes; "I *will* look well and be well when he comes back to me. O the Darling! here is one of his bitter apples. I can hardly find it in my heart to throw it into the fire. . . . I walked round the two Lakes, crossed the stepping-stones at Rydale Foot. Sate down where we always sit. I was full of thought about my darling. Blessings on him." This was put in the Journal less than three hours after his departure, and she wrote him a letter that night and received one from him next day. He brought home two new stanzas of "Ruth." Within a week, it is a pleasure to know, he wrote the exquisite lines "To a Butterfly," beginning "Stay near me—do not take thy flight," which contain a touching reminiscence of their childhood at Cockermouth, and must have made her fond heart melt with happiness. In the meanwhile he had been working at "The Singing Bird," later called "The Sailor's Mother," a poem which followed "nearly to the letter"* a story told him by a woman he had recently met near their cottage. He was also writing the poem now called "Beggars," and then known as "The Beggar Woman and the Beggar Boy." For this he used the very minute account of an incident narrated in Dorothy's Journal nearly three years before. "I read to William," she says, "that account of the little boy belonging to the tall woman, and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem. He left it unfinished, and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydale he had got warm with the subject and had half cast the poem." Again she tells how "William kindled and began to write." She was often in a trembling ecstasy, between joy and pain, but there were long intervals of tranquil time, filled, as one could wish all of life to be filled, with a well-balanced proportion of physical and intellectual effort. Her brother was more independent, but had fewer resources outside of his own mind.

* Fenwick note.

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On March 18 a stir was in the air. Coleridge had arrived in the north. Wordsworth seems to have gone out on that day and the next to look for him, but he came to Dove Cottage unexpectedly, when it was raining so hard that Dorothy "did not wish for nor expect him." She writes: "His eyes were a little swollen with the wind. I was much affected by the sight of him. He seemed half stupefied." This would seem to show that she did not yet suspect the real cause of his peculiar appearance.

The grand talks of old recommenced, with a dispute about Ben Jonson, but after Coleridge had gone to bed, his friends sat up till four o'clock, and Dorothy adds: "My spirits were agitated very much." Possibly William on this occasion enlightened her as to Coleridge's condition.

Their wonderful visitor stayed only two days, returning to his family at Keswick. The result of the reunion at Dove Cottage was a strengthening of his self-control, and, as usual, an increase of productive energy and versatility in Wordsworth. The latter wrote "The Cuckoo" a day or two after Coleridge left them, one of his most musical poems—"O blithe new-comer, I have heard"; and before the week was out, he followed it with the lines, of similar joyousness and melody:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky,

and began, on "a divine morning," an ode, which must have been no other than the great "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood."

But something of Coleridge's restlessness had remained with them, for this glorious activity was interrupted on March 28 to begin a round of visits. Going first to Calvert's, near Keswick, where they met the Coleridges and Thomas Wilkinson, they spent a week on the way to Thomas Clarkson's, and here Dorothy remained eight days, while her brother went to the Hutchinsons in Yorkshire. On April 13 he returned, having composed

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and written "The Glow-worm"—*i.e.*, the lines beginning "Among all lovely things my love had been." The poet's nephew, in the "Memoirs" (Vol. I., p. 186), quotes from a letter, now lost, written by Wordsworth to Coleridge in April, 1802: "The incident of this poem took place about seven years ago between my sister and me." The verses were printed in 1807, but never again during Wordsworth's lifetime, which is remarkable, considering their beauty. They belong to the mysterious "Lucy poems." In her Journal, under date of the 20th, Dorothy, however, records with great particularity that he wrote them on horseback, on the 12th, near the town of Staindrop, "on Monday, 12th April, 1802." It is very unusual for her to be so exact in giving a date.

They walked home from Eusemere, by way of Kirkstone Pass, on the 15th and 16th. On the first of these days they saw the "host of golden daffodils" which suggested the lovely poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud"; and on the second day, at the foot of Brothers Water, Dorothy "found William writing a poem descriptive of the sights and sounds we saw and heard," which must have been the joyous lines:

> The cock is crowing,
> The stream is flowing, etc.

The place has not changed. The bridge, bristling with rue and spleenwort, still spans the rushing brook where William sat, and one can follow the shady path up which Dorothy strolled to have a peep at the arched windows of Hartsop Hall. Every particular of the clear-cut little poem remains as it was. How exactly the brother and sister saw things! The depth of their feelings can be measured by the truth of their perceptions. The precision of their expressions was due to the intensity of their experience, and this was intense because it was simple.

The poem on the daffodils was not written until many months afterward, but, with the very great exception of its musical form and its indwelling thought, so amply

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illustrating "the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement," its elements are present in Dorothy's description, to which he no doubt turned. This is the *locus classicus* in her whole Journal, and is so often quoted to show the co-operation of their minds that I almost hesitate to copy it once more:

"When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads on these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway."

Two days after their return to their own cottage and orchard, Wordsworth wrote the quaint little poem, somewhat in Blake's manner, called "The Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly." "We left out some lines," says his sister, as if she associated herself with him in its authorship. That week Coleridge, as usual, came to them. He "repeated the verses he wrote to Sara." "I was affected by them," we read in the Journal, "and in miserable spirits. The sunshine, the green fields, and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy, sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me." What poem was this? Professor Knight conjectures, but apparently without any evidence, that it may have been "the first draft of Dejection, an Ode, in its earliest and afterwards abandoned form." Probably it has not been preserved. We must again remind ourselves that the Sara from whom letters were constantly arriving, and

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often in connection with Coleridge's, and of whom, for example, Dorothy writes, during this visit of his, " We wished for Mary and Sara. . . . C. received a letter from Sara," was Sara Hutchinson. While Sara Hutchinson belonged to the inmost circle, poor Mrs. Coleridge's company was never sought by the Wordsworths, for its own sake, and rarely indeed by her husband. An entry in the Journal for May 6 reads: " When we came in we found a magazine, and review, and a letter from Coleridge, verses to Hartley, and Sara H."

Whoever thinks it necessary to *see* the discord and misery of Coleridge's home life has only to read that portion of his long letter to Southey written July 29, 1802,* in which he refers to Mrs. Coleridge's " inveterate habits of puny thwarting and unintermitting dyspathy." They were an ill-mated pair, each no doubt trying to make up for an enormous disparity of tastes by repentances and sacrifice, which resulted in frequent reconcilement but no permanent happiness.

On April 20 Wordsworth had added to his poem " To a Butterfly " the lines beginning " I've watched you now a full half-hour," which have always been published separately, and have been improperly dated in a Fenwick note. After Coleridge's visit, which lasted five days, he composed " The Tinker "† and the lines entitled " Foresight." He was evidently, as his classification later goes to prove, trying to put into permanent form as many as possible of his childhood recollections, and this is one of the Poems referring to the Period of Childhood. On April 30 and May 1 he wrote " The Celandine," published in 1807 as two separate poems. On May 3 he began to compose " The Leech Gatherer," known also by the less interesting title " Resolution and Independence," and continued it next morning. None of his poems exhausted him more than this, and no wonder, for it gave an outlet to those fears which nowhere else escaped him—fears of poverty, of futility, of madness even. In few of his poems does he attain

* E. H. Coleridge, " Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 389.

† It is in Nowell C. Smith's edition, III. 423.

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so great perfection of form. In none is there a figure so elaborate and yet so finished as the double simile of the huge stone, "like a sea-beast crawled forth." Considering the scrupulous principles of his art, his extreme care to preserve the lineaments of truth in every detail, and to harmonize the form of his poems to the particular mode they were intended to express, it is plain that this poem must have cost him dear in both emotion and artistic effort. Before it was finished, Coleridge joined them again, at the Rock of Names,* between Grasmere and Keswick, and they had an afternoon together. From him, perhaps, was caught the tone of melancholy, from which Wordsworth's other poems, written that happy spring-time, were conspicuously free. On March 7 Dorothy records that her brother "fell to work at The Leech Gatherer; he wrote hard at it till dinner-time, then he gave over, tired to death—he had finished the poem." His high-strung condition betrayed itself next day, for when she read "Henry V." to him in the orchard he wept. And the poem was not so soon finished, after all, for on the 9th he worked at it "almost incessantly from morning till tea-time." "I was oppressed," she says, "and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death." But this time it was really done, and she copied it and other poems for Coleridge.

As usual, however, Wordsworth, still in the glow of completing one task, began another, and that same evening he "wrote two stanzas in the manner of Thomson's Castle of Indolence, and was tired out." The day closed with bad news from Coleridge. The two stanzas were no doubt a portion of that enigmatical poem beginning "Within our happy Castle there dwelt One." Considering the playful tone of these verses, it is astonishing to read of the toil Wordsworth bestowed on them. "William is still at work," his sister writes next day, "though it is past ten o'clock; he will be tired out, I

* The initials W. W., M. H., D. W., S. T. C., J. W., and S. H., were carved on a rock by the shore of Thirlmere. Owing to the change of level when the lake was made into a reservoir, this precious memorial was taken down and replaced at a higher point. Unfortunately, it was much damaged in the process, but some of the letters may still be seen.

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DOVE COTTAGE FROM THE ORCHARD

From a photograph by Walmsley

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am sure. My heart fails me." That night he could not sleep, but on the third day she records that he "finished the poem about C. and himself."

Coleridge came again on the 12th. "We sate up," the Journal says, "till one o'clock all together, then William went to bed, and I sate with C. in the sitting-room (where he slept) till a quarter past two o'clock." When Coleridge was not with them, there was an almost daily interchange of letters. His were melancholy, and caused great uneasiness. For example, on May 15 Dorothy writes: "We had a melancholy letter from Coleridge at bedtime. It distressed me very much, and I resolved upon going to Keswick the next day." She went, alone, on the 17th, and spent two days, Coleridge bringing her halfway home on the 19th. They found him again beside the Keswick road, on the 22nd, "sitting under Sara's rock." He poured out his heart about his private affairs, and came home with them for two days. He was with them again from June 9 to 12.

My belief that Wordsworth's love for France and sympathetic interest in her affairs still persisted receives support from the sonnet beginning "I grieved for Buonaparté," which is doubtless one of the two referred to as follows on May 21: "William wrote two sonnets on Buonaparte, after I had read Milton's sonnets to him"; and also more strongly from a remark, under date of Feburary 8: "Coleridge's letter somewhat damped us. It spoke with less confidence about France." Coleridge had completely gone over to the side of "patriotism." The sonnet seems at most to express grief that a nation should expect true guidance from a man trained in battles, but there is a noticeable absence of hostility to France. It was printed in *The Morning Post* for September 16, 1802, unsigned, and on January 29, 1803, with the initials W. L. D.,* and incorrectly dated 1801 in Wordsworth's editions of his poems.

On June 18 came news that Lord Lowther intended to pay the debt due to their father. Immediately letters

* Knight's Eversley edition of the Poems, II. 323.

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on this subject were despatched to Coleridge, Mary Hutchinson, and Richard Wordsworth, the brother in London. The poet, now obliged to attend to business, and realizing that he was no longer too poor to marry, hastened away to Eusemere to consult his experienced friend Clarkson. One can imagine the excitement at Dove Cottage in his absence: a letter from Basil Montagu, who seems to have been their adviser in money matters, and one from Richard, bewildering the poor girl so that she " could settle to nothing "; her brother Christopher to be informed; recourse to Shakespeare to steady herself; and then in comes Coleridge, for whom she must cook supper and make ready a room. But she was not too tired to sit up and hear him talk till one o'clock. He came again, before the end of the month, and the letters went back and forth as usual.

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CHAPTER XIX

MARRIAGE

In June Wordsworth wrote the lines beginning "The sun has long been set," which contain an allusion, I think, to one of Charles Lamb's eulogies of London life as compared with country pleasures, and wrought at the great Intimations Ode. He also sent an elaborate reply, as we have seen, to John Wilson, of Glasgow. But what seems to have busied him most was the touching poem composed in anticipation of leaving Grasmere and breaking up the old life with his sister, the lines beginning "Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain ground." The time had come when he was able to marry. There is no reason to doubt the reality of his affection for Mary Hutchinson. Nothing in his existing letters, however, or in Dorothy's Journal, gives the slightest indication that, up to this time at least, it had risen to the height of a passion. Surely if his soul had been possessed with an overwhelming happy love, his sister, so unselfish, so observant, so exact and unflinching in what she wrote, would have revealed the fact. This poem is not the cry of an eager lover, but rather the farewell of a man reluctant to give up a blessed certainty of happiness, almost an apology to the sister who has been the companion of his past, and a promise that the future shall see as little change in their life as possible.

On the evening of July 8 poor Dorothy wrote in her Journal: "O beautiful place! dear Mary, William. The hour is come. . . . I must prepare to go. The swallows, I must leave them, the wall, the garden, the roses, all. Dear creatures! they sang last night after I

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was in bed; seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well, I must go. Farewell." And on July 9 they set out together for the Hutchinsons' place, Gallow Hill, near Scarborough, Yorkshire. Coleridge was watching for them at Sara's Rock. They spent two nights at Keswick, and had a melancholy parting with their friend. On the way to Eusemere, where they stayed two days with the Clarksons, they lingered and loitered that they might be alone. On the 16th they reached Gallow Hill, having travelled partly by post-chaise and partly on foot.

And now, instead of marrying his betrothed, what did this strange lover do, after a visit of ten days, but start off to France with his sister! To an attentive reader of the Journal, this is not so surprising as it might be to one who had failed to observe certain mysterious allusions, and a few words in a letter written by Dorothy to Mrs. Marshall, November 30, 1795, shortly after her arrival at Racedown. "William," she says, "has had a letter from France since we came here. Annette mentions having dispatched half a dozen, none of which he has received." In her Journal on December 21, 1801, she mentions the receipt of a letter from France. On January 26, 1802, she says: "Wm. wrote to Annette." On February 13 there came a letter "from the Frenchman in London," and on the 15th "a letter from Annette." Under date of February 22 we find: "Wm brought me 4 letters to read—from Annette and Caroline, Mary and Sara and Coleridge;" and on February 24 "Wm. wrote to Annette." On March 22 we find the following entry, in which going to Mary is connected with seeing Annette: "A rainy day. Wm. very poorly. 2 letters from Sara and one from poor Annette. Wrote to my brother Richard [a rare occurrence]. We talked a good deal about C. and other interesting things. We resolved to see Annette, and that Wm. should go to Mary." On the 26th "Wm. wrote to Annette." As we saw, Wordsworth went into Yorkshire early in April.

And now, in July, leaving Mary on the 26th, they

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went, by way of Hull, Lincoln, and Peterborough, to London, where they arrived on the 29th. Two days later, " after various troubles and disasters," they left London on the Dover coach at half-past five or six. " It was a beautiful morning," she writes. " The city, St. Paul's, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles." It was in this hour that Wordsworth began to compose the famous sonnet, one of his earliest, beginning " Earth has not anything to show more fair." In his own editions he mistakenly states that it was composed September 3, but in the Fenwick note he says it was " written on the roof of a coach, on my way to France."

Sailing from Dover that night, they reached Calais at four o'clock on Sunday morning, August 1.* Dorothy's brief account of this visit, which appears to have been confined to Calais, was not written until her return to Grasmere. Nothing is said as to its purpose. " We found Annette and C.," she writes, " chez Madame Avril dans la Rue de la Tête d'or. . . . We walked by the seashore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone. . . . One night I shall never forget—the day had been very hot, and William and I walked alone together upon the pier." She describes the scene, and adds, as if she and William had not really been alone: " Caroline was delighted." This was probably the occasion of his writing the sonnet, " It is a beauteous evening, calm and free," and the " dear Child ! dear girl !" that walked with them there, " untouched by solemn thought," is, of course, not his sister, who was only too easily affected by such sights. The seven other sonnets composed at or near Calais during this sojourn are all of a political character, and a close examination of them discloses the trend of Words-

* The date " 31st of July " in the Journal is incorrect.

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worth's feelings on the great subject which had run like a deep undertone through all his adult life. The Consulship for life was granted to Napoleon on August 2. By the 7th the news had reached Calais, and on that day Wordsworth wrote his remonstrance to the "men of prostrate minds" who had thus demonstrated their proneness to slavery, the sonnet beginning "Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind." On the same day, "on the road leading to Ardres," he composed the sonnet beginning "Jones! as from Calais southward you and I," in which he contrasts the high hopes, the songs, garlands, mirth, banners, and happy faces, of the time "when faith was pledged to new-born Liberty" with the disheartened state of the French now. He distinctly avers, however, that he himself has not given up. "Despair," he sings,

> Touches me not, though pensive as a bird
> Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare.

France had been, indeed, his vernal covert. These two lines, however, were substituted in 1827 for the original, which indicate even more clearly the undaunted attitude of his mind, and are as follows:

> Yet despair
> I feel not: happy am I as a bird:
> Fair seasons yet will come, and hopes as fair.

On Napoleon's birthday, the 15th, he composed the sonnet beginning "Festivals have I seen that were not names." He compares the present apathy with the sublime though senseless joy he had witnessed "in a prouder time," and concludes:

> Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,
> Consul, or King, can sound himself to know
> The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

His revolt against the Napoleonic tyranny shows itself again in the glorious sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic," in that upon "The King of Sweden," and in that "To Toussaint l'Ouverture." And, by a natural return of the mind to his own country,

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whose white cliffs by day and lighthouses at night reminded him that she was unconquered, he felt a newborn pride in her, which he expressed in the sonnet beginning " Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west." The sway which France had so long held in his heart was now broken. The abasement of her people before a man who represented in a fresh form the bondage they had thrown off, only a few years before, lowered them in his eyes. France no longer seemed to him the champion of liberty. England, in comparison, was a land of freedom. Henceforth he founded his affections upon his own country. Whatever its result, the visit to Calais was undoubtedly undertaken for the sole purpose of making a settlement with Annette, and bidding farewell to her and the child, who must now have been about ten years old.

On Sunday, August 29, exactly four weeks after their arrival at Calais, the Wordsworths sailed back to Dover, where they sat upon the cliffs and " looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought," as Dorothy records. They reached London next day. We catch a glimpse of them in a letter from Charles Lamb to Coleridge dated September 8, in which he says: " The Wordsworths are at Montagu's rooms, near neighbours to us. They dined with us yesterday, and I was their guide to Bartlemy Fair."* The Lambs had been in the Lake country during the Wordsworths absence, visiting Coleridge. They had stayed a day or two at Dove Cottage, together with the Clarksons, although the inmates were away, and had only just returned to London, as we learn from a letter of Lamb to his friend Manning, dated September 24.† In the same letter he says: " The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London, and past much time with us: he is now gone to Yorkshire to be married to a girl of small fortune, but he is in expectation of augmenting his own in consequence of the death of Lord Lonsdale, who kept him out of his own in conformity with a plan

* E. V. Lucas, " The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 242.

† *Ibid.*, p. 244, and Vol. VII., p. 968.

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milord had taken up in early life, of making everybody unhappy." In her Journal, Dorothy Wordsworth records that she and her brother stayed in London till Wednesday, September 22, and arrived at Gallow Hill on Friday. In a letter from this place to Mrs. Marshall, dated September 29, only part of which has ever been printed, she says they were detained in London by a succession of unexpected events — the arrival of their brother Christopher, then of their brother John. The latter had recently returned from a long voyage, and was preparing to sail again in November. The former, now a Cambridge fellow, was deeply engaged in classical and theological studies. Business matters connected with the restitution of their property no doubt required their presence in London with their elder brother Richard. This seems to have been the first occasion on which the whole family were together since their childhood. Two days of this time Dorothy and William spent with their uncle and aunt Cookson at Windsor.

The poetical mood which had come upon Wordsworth at Calais persisted during the three weeks of his sojourn in London. Without abating one jot of his political principles, he acknowledges, in a second group of sonnets, that France had ceased to follow true liberty: he asserts the soundness and strength of British character; he laments the luxury which rendered England's wealth a menace to herself; he warns his countrymen that nations can be great and free only by the soul. The first of these, composed two days after landing, is the one beginning " We had a female passenger who came " (†),* in which he deplores the expulsion of negroes from France by decree of the government. In the second, beginning " Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood," he rejoices in the severing seas that preserve England from the " almost frightful neighbourhood " of France, while not forgetting that virtue and wisdom are her real protection.

* The three sonnets marked with a dagger were, as Mr. T. Hutchinson has noted in his edition of the Poems, printed for the first time in *The Morning Post*, in 1803. They may have been considerably altered by that time, and it is not quite certain, therefore, that they accurately represent the state of the poet's mind in September, 1802.

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In a third, beginning " O Friend ! I know not which way I must look," the word " Coleridge " standing in the original manuscript for " O Friend," according to Professor Knight,* he laments the " rapine, avarice, expense," of his countrymen, declaring that " plain living and high thinking are no more." The discouragement and distrust expressed in this sonnet were at once apologized for, in another, beginning " When I have borne in memory what has tamed " (†). His fears, he confesses, were unfilial. Great examples from out the storied Past are evoked in two others, that beginning " It is not to be thought of that the Flood " (†), and the one beginning " Milton ! thou shouldst be living at this hour." Finally, he even goes so far as to deny, most absurdly, that France has produced great books, great laws, or great ideas !

> Perpetual emptiness ! unceasing change !
> No single volume paramount, no code,
> No master spirit, no determined road;
> But equally a want of books and men !

To charge the French, of all people, with intellectual sterility, was to show an amusing narrowness of judgment. But it is a pitiful trait of human nature that, like the cloud, we move altogether if we move at all, and can scarcely admit that what we have ceased to love has any kind of merit.

Like the hearty countryfolk they were, the Hutchinsons gathered to meet their friends at Gallow Hill. When the Wordsworths arrived, on September 24, " Tom was forking corn, standing upon the corn-cart." Mary and Sara and Joanna were at home, and the party was joined presently by Jack and George. None of Wordsworth's brothers appear to have come for his wedding. What his emotions upon this occasion were he has given us no means of knowing. Those of his sister are easy to divine from her letter to Mrs. Marshall of September 29 and the passage in her Journal covering the marriage day. Renunciation, a sober and reasoned

* Eversley edition of the Poems, II. 345.

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willingness, and a brave effort to be cheerful, are what we find in them. She was making a great sacrifice. The day of her felicity had begun to decline.

"MY DEAR JANE," she writes,*—"If this letter reaches you before next Monday, you will think of me travelling towards our own dear Grasmere with my most beloved brother and his wife. I have long loved Mary Hutchinson as a sister, and she is greatly attached to me; this being so, you will guess that I look forward with perfect happiness to this connection between us; but, happy as I was, I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings past, present, and future, which will come upon me on the wedding morning. There never lived on earth a better woman than Mary H., and I have not a doubt that she is in every respect formed to make an excellent wife to my brother, and I seem to myself to have scarcely anything left to wish for, but that the wedding was over and we had reached our home once again. We have indeed been a long time absent; it was, however, a delightful thing to us to see all our brothers, particularly John."

In her Journal, Dorothy gives the following less restrained account of the wedding day:

"On Monday, 4th October, 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night, and rose fresh and well in the morning. At a little after eight o'clock I saw them go down the avenue towards the church.† William had parted from me upstairs. When they were absent, my dear little

* From a manuscript letter in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

† I have not myself seen the marriage entry in the parish register at Brompton Church, Yorkshire, but the following "verbatim copy" by Francis W. Jackson, Ebberston Vicarage, York, was printed in *Notes and Queries*, February 22, 1896:

"William Wordsworth, of Grasmere, in Westmoreland, gentleman, and Mary Hutchinson, of Gallow Hill, in the parish of Brompton, were married in this church by license this fourth day of October, in the year one thousand eight hundred and two, by me John Ellis, officiating minister.

This marriage was solemnized between us	WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, MARY HUTCHINSON.
In the presence of	THOMAS HUTCHINSON, JOANNA HUTCHINSON, JOHN HUTCHINSON.

Mr. Jackson gives the following description of Gallow Hill and the Hutchinsons' farm: "Gallow Hill is a mound, or small elevation, about

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Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither hearing nor seeing anything till Sara came upstairs to me, and said, 'They are coming.' This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom. He and John Hutchinson led me to the house, and there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary. As soon as we had breakfasted we departed. It rained when we set off. Poor Mary was much agitated when she parted from her brothers and sisters, and her home."*

We could wish that our only account of so important an event as Wordsworth's marriage were more complete or at least more cheerful. Dorothy's record of the journey back to Grasmere is unusually full, but of remarks about fields, and woods, and ruins, rather than her own feelings or the behaviour of her companions. They travelled all three together in a post-chaise, stopping at Lemming Lane the first night, and Hawes the second, and reaching Grasmere on the third evening. Part of their course was the same she and her brother had followed nearly three years before, on their memorable walk into the Lake country. "When we passed through the village of Wensley," she says pathetically, "my heart melted away, with dear recollections—the

which are growing a few weather-beaten trees, about some three-quarters of a mile, more or less, east of Sawdon station, and one hundred yards or so north of the railway. A little to the west of the hill is a small solitary house, with small farm buildings, now in the occupation of Lord Downe's steward. It was from this house that Mary Hutchinson was married."

Mary Hutchinson was born August 16, 1770, at Penrith.

* In his autobiographical memoranda Wordsworth records his marriage in the following amazing statement: "In the year 1802 I married Mary Hutchinson, at Brompton, near Scarborough, to which part of the country the family had removed from Sockburn. We had known each other from childhood, and had practised reading and spelling under the same old dame at Penrith, a remarkable personage, who had taught three generations, of the upper classes principally, of the town of Penrith and its neighbourhood." This passage almost leaves in doubt whether it was Mary Hutchinson he married or the old dame at Penrith! At least we find him here "In equal scale weighing delight and dole."

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bridge, the little waterspout, the steep hill, the church. They are among the most vivid of my own inner visions, for they were the first objects that I saw after we were left to ourselves, and had turned our whole hearts to Grasmere as a home in which we were to rest."

A remarkable proof of Wordsworth's capability of abstraction and an almost distressing evidence of placidity is the fact that after the first day's journey he composed a sonnet, on a sunset, and on the next morning another on the captivity of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Bolton Castle. By a well-merited fate, neither was successful. He thought so himself in the case of the second.

This is not the place to attempt to form an estimate of Mrs. Wordsworth's character. Suffice it to say that she was a good woman, tender, self-sacrificing, and kind; that she was not only accomplished in household arts, but sufficiently intellectual to be extremely useful to her husband on the mechanical side of authorship; that she made him happy, and that all who knew her well, throughout a long and active life, loved and honoured her. If the courtship was strikingly devoid of romantic elements, the marriage proved to be, in every domestic sense, prosperous. It may indeed be true that Wordsworth's genius would have expanded more fully had he not been admired with such blind devotion in his own home and served so humbly.

I must here refer to the doubt as to whether Mrs. Wordsworth or someone else was the subject of the lines beginning "She was a Phantom of delight." The poet told a nephew of Coleridge in 1836 that the poem "was written on 'his dear wife,'" and Bishop Wordsworth was at some pains to insist on this view in the "Memoirs." We have also the testimony of Henry Crabb Robinson, in his Diary for May 12, 1842, that the poet told him the verses were on his wife. On the other hand we have the following passage in Harriet Martineau's affectionate article on Mrs. Wordsworth, in her "Biographical Sketches": "In the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth' it is stated that she was the original of 'She was a Phantom of de-

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light,' and some things in the next few pages look like it; but for the greater part of the Poet's life it was certainly believed by some who ought to know that that wonderful description related to another, who flitted before his imagination in earlier days than those in which he discovered the aptitude of Mary Hutchinson to his own needs."

Miss Martineau was a neighbour of the Wordsworths in their old age; and though she complained of the narrowness of their circle, and the language above cited is possibly a little sarcastic, her tone when writing of them is generally very respectful. Her information was probably at fault this time.

On Wordsworth's wedding day, Coleridge printed in *The Morning Post* his touching poem "Dejection: an Ode." He doubtless chose that date out of compliment to his friend. The history of this poem is very interesting. It was composed on April 4, 1802, when William and Dorothy Wordsworth were visiting him at Keswick. On the 3rd the two poets had made an ascent of Skiddaw. Coleridge was at this time in one of the most terrible throes of his losing struggle against bodily pain and mental despondency. His mysterious and no doubt very real ailment assumed Protean forms of torture. The habit of taking opium was fixed upon him. Natural joy, to which his fine organization made him peculiarly susceptible, was now seldom his. And he knew that this loss meant the end of poetic inspiration. He was deeply conscious of his failure as a husband and father. Self-control, and with it self-respect, had gone. But with a sweetness of soul and a beautiful absence of envy, for which we cannot too much honour him, he rejoiced that what he lacked his friend possessed. With no mere selfish dependence, but quite disinterested satisfaction, he virtually said of Wordsworth, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He leaned upon Wordsworth. It was probably Wordsworth's will-power, more than his own, that held him so long in the North at this time, trying to do his duty to his family, trying to overcome his frailty, trying to benefit by the restorative influence of nature.

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It would not have been like him to conceal the poem from his friends. They shared his sorrows; they should also share this "timely utterance," which, we may hope, gave relief to his feelings of gratitude and satisfaction to his artistic sense. In the original manuscript, the word "William" stands where "Lady" and "Otway" stand in the poem as finally published. As printed in *The Morning Post* it was in an intermediate state. The sixth and part of the seventh stanzas, as we have them now, were omitted, and "William" was changed to "Edmund." As Canon Ainger remarked in his essay on this ode,* "Coleridge was fond of the name, using it elsewhere for imaginary personages." He made the change merely out of respect for Wordsworth's natural desire for privacy, and signed the poem with the phonetic equivalent of his own initials, ΕΣΤΗΣΕ. By the time he published "Sibylline Leaves," in 1807, a cloud had come between him and his friend, and the further changes were made for this reason. He was aware, in 1802, that Wordsworth was working at an even greater tribute to him, a monument of their mutual affection, "The Prelude." Coleridge's ode, as originally printed, may be seen in an Appendix to J. Dykes Campbell's edition of his Poetical Works.

Anyone who has studied the Prefaces to "Lyrical Ballads" and Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria" will perceive that this poem is a confession of unfaithfulness to the "great task of happiness." In those treatises the principle is definitely laid down that happiness is the source and purpose of poetry. After describing the wonders of night, the poet cries "I *see*, not *feel* how beautiful they are," and, carrying out this complaint, he laments:

> My genial spirits fail;
> And what can these avail,
> To lift the smoth'ring weight from off my breast?
> It were a vain endeavour,
> Though I should gaze for ever
> On that green light that lingers in the west;
> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

* "Lectures and Essays," II. 98.

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Coleridge's revolt from the sensational psychology of Locke and the other masters of his earlier thinking, and a clear trace of the philosophic idealism to which he was becoming more and more attached ever since he was drawn to the study of Kant, are transmuted into their classical artistic expression in the fourth stanza:*

O William! we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world, *allow'd*
To the poor loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
O pure of heart! Thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be?
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous William! joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Joy, William! is the spirit and the pow'r,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r,
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamed of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We, we ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

This inward power, this "shaping spirit of Imagination," he himself, he cries, has lost, but Wordsworth,

* An early version of a large part of the poem may be read in Coleridge's letter to W. Sotheby, dated July 10, 1802, printed in E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 376. In it we find the following lines:

Calm, steadfast spirit, guided from above,
O Wordsworth! Friend of my devotest choice,
Great son of genius! full of light and love.

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the pure of heart, has kept the charm, and the poem concludes:

> O William, friend of my devoutest choice,
> O rais'd from anxious dread and busy care,
> By the immenseness of the good and fair
> Which thou see'st everywhere,
> Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
> To thee do all things live from pole to pole,
> Their life the eddying of thy living soul!
> O simple spirit, guided from above,
> O lofty Poet, full of life and love,
> Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,
> Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

A clearer vision of the truth no man ever had. It was a vision of the kind that comes only to one who has failed, in the hour when all illusion is torn from the soul. But the very humility that enabled Coleridge thus to prefer his friend was itself a glory. By losing himself he found himself, and this one ode would suffice to confer upon him "titles manifold," of poet, man, and Christian.

One month after this composition Wordsworth began "The Leech Gatherer, or Resolution and Independence," not, we may well believe, without a deep consciousness that he was developing some of the thoughts suggested by Coleridge's ode. I agree with Professor Knight that the sixth stanza of "The Leech Gatherer" should not be regarded as having direct reference to Coleridge, and that the warning there uttered is due to Wordsworth's knowledge of his own shortcomings. Yet the spirit of the whole can be best understood if the ode is borne in mind. There is likewise a subtle connection between Coleridge's idea of the inner light, its priority to sensation and the means of its extinction, on the one hand, and the central thought of Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," on the other.

The forebodings of poverty, insanity, and death, in "The Leech Gatherer," were not without foundation in a depressed state of mind. Wordsworth was suffering from the strain of composition and other difficulties that

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had presented themselves during the past year. We have testimony to this fact in a letter from Thomas Wedgwood to his brother Josiah, November 28, 1802, which says: "Coleridge is astonished at my pertinacious regularity and abstemiousness; says if Wordsworth had a quarter as much control over himself he would be in perfect health instead of great hypochondriacism."*

The bringing home of the bride did not occasion much change at first in the life at Town-end. Within a week the little family went to Keswick for a visit of several days, and on their return they gave their first social entertainment of the common miscellaneous kind: they had thirteen neighbours to tea! The fact is quite shocking in its isolation. Coleridge departed for a short trip to London, and immediately Wordsworth, as if his creative impulse had departed too, began to translate Ariosto. He had carried a copy of the "Orlando Furioso," in his pocket on his long tour with Jones in 1790.† On December 24 Coleridge came again, bringing his generous patron, Wedgwood. There was much visiting back and forth during the autumn and winter. On the last page of her Journal, which ends January 11, 1803, Dorothy remarks, "William was working at his poem to C.," which, I have no doubt, was "The Prelude."

The community of spirit between these two great men had now for some time been at its height. On Wordsworth's part it involved putting up with a thousand little inconsistencies and disappointments. In Coleridge it was based on a general acknowledgment of his own moral and even intellectual inferiority, an inferiority which he was quicker to feel and express than anyone else. In neither case did it involve any of those compromises, degrading or soul-saving according to the motive that prompts them, which form the working basis of most friendships. They were frank and independent men, to whom it never occurred to trifle with the truth in any matter of literary, political, or philo-

* See Meteyard, "A Group of Englishmen."

† See Eversley edition of the Poems, I. 35, note.

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sophic principle. This accounts for the seeming ruthlessness of Wordsworth's references to Coleridge's contributions to "Lyrical Ballads," and also for the freedom with which Coleridge judges his friend's theory of poetry. Their mutual admiration was so deep, their loyalty to each other was so strong, their general agreement on the essential principles of what most concerned both of them was so well founded, that they thought they had nothing to fear from any whole-hearted utterance. And, indeed, though temporary estrangement was to come later, nothing ever destroyed the profound respect they felt for each other's intellectual powers, or the desire to help each other, or the love that bound them together in spirit. Wordsworth, with the command he had won upon his naturally impetuous disposition, restrained his tongue and his pen from any expression of bitterness, almost from any utterance of impatience. Coleridge behaved like a saint. But, as I have said, they were quite outspoken when criticizing one another's works. In a letter to W. Sotheby, dated Keswick, July 13, 1802,* Coleridge wrote:

"I was much pleased with your description of Wordsworth's character as it appeared to you. . . . The word 'homogeneous' gave me great pleasure, as most accurately and happily expressing him. I must set you right with regard to my perfect coincidence with his poetic creed. It is most certain that the heads of our mutual conversations, etc., and the passages, were indeed partly taken from notes of mine; for it was at first intended that the preface [to "Lyrical Ballads"] should be written by me. And it is likewise true that I warmly accord with Wordsworth in his abhorrence of these poetic licenses, as they are called, which are indeed mere tricks of convenience and laziness." And yet, he declares, "poetry justifies as poetry, independent of any other passion, some new combinations of language, and *commands* the omission of many others allowable in other compositions. Now Wordsworth, *me saltem judice*, has in his system not sufficiently admitted the former, and in his practice has too frequently sinned against the latter. Indeed, we have had lately some little con-

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 373.

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troversy on the subject, and we begin to suspect that there is somewhere or other a radical difference in our opinions. *Dulce est inter amicos rarissima dissensione condere plurimas consentiones*, saith St. Augustine, who said more good things than any saint or sinner that I ever read in Latin."

A further adumbration or promise of "Biographia Literaria" occurs in a letter to Southey, July 29, 1802,* in which Coleridge describes a projected volume, "Concerning Poetry and the characteristic merits of the Poets, our contemporaries." He declares:

"The object is not to examine what is good in each writer, but what has *ipso facto* pleased, and to what faculties, or passions, or habits of the mind, they may be supposed to have given pleasure. Of course, Darwin and Wordsworth, having given each a defence of their mode of poetry, and a disquisition on the nature and essence of poetry in general, I shall necessarily be led rather deeper, and these I shall treat of either first or last. But I will apprise you of one thing, that although Wordsworth's Preface is half a child of my own brain, and arose out of conversations so frequent that, with few exceptions, we could scarcely either of us, perhaps, positively say which first started a particular thought (I am speaking of the Preface as it stood in the second volume), yet I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth. He has written lately a number of Poems (thirty-two in all), some of them of considerable length (the longest one hundred and sixty lines), the greater number of these, to my feelings, very excellent compositions, but here and there a daring humbleness of language and versification, and a strict adherence to matter of fact, even to prolixity, that startled me. His alterations, likewise, in 'Ruth' perplexed me, and I have thought and thought again, and have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth. On the contrary, I rather suspect that somewhere or other there is a radical difference in our theoretical opinions respecting poetry; this I shall endeavour to go to the bottom of, and, acting the arbitrator between the old school and the new school, hope to lay down some plain and conspicuous, though not superficial, canons of criticism respecting poetry. What an admirable definition Milton gives,

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 386.

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quite in an ' obiter ' way, when he says of poetry, that it is ' *simple, sensuous, passionate !*' It truly comprises the whole that can be said on the subject. In the new edition of the L. Ballads there is a valuable appendix, which I am sure you must like, and in the Preface itself considerable additions; one on the dignity and nature of the office and character of a Poet, that is very grand, and of a sort of Verulamian power and majesty, but it is, in parts (and this is the fault, *me judice*, of all the latter half of that Preface), obscure beyond any necessity, and the extreme elaboration and almost constrainedness of the diction contrasted (to my feelings) somewhat harshly with the general style of these Poems, to which the Preface is an introduction."

We cannot be too grateful for that phrase, " Verulamian power and majesty." The passage just quoted contains the germ of Coleridge's " Biographia Literaria," which, together with Wordsworth's Preface, constitutes the most original, philosophic, and reconstructive work in modern literary criticism, until the publication of Tolstoi's " What is Art ?" which puts the whole subject on a broader basis. The fifth, sixth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters, which are the marrow of Tolstoi's startling but in the end convincing book, contain a new evangel of criticism. As between Wordsworth and Coleridge, it is important to note that the former, though a stiffer and more practical nature, was the innovator, the iconoclast, the radical, both in theory and in practice; while the latter, a dreamer, a person reckoned irresponsible, was full of hampering misgivings and retrospective qualifications. He stood aghast at Wordsworth's audacity, and thought him ruthless. Wordsworth's consistency, the homogeneity which Coleridge praised, was the very essence and warrant of his greatness. We can well dispense with the praise of those who commend his less characteristic beauties at the expense of his true grandeur, who profess to allow him the title of a major poet because he has sometimes equalled Milton in Miltonic qualities or anticipated the refinements of Tennyson. Take from Wordsworth's poetry all its lines of Virgilian elegance, of Tennysonian

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grace, of Miltonic majesty, and you will still have, in what is left, the true Wordsworth, the central, unmistakably personal qualities of which the rest is but a far circumference, dull and wan in some quarters, splendid enough in others, but not always bound to the midmost point by a true radiation.

To act as arbitrator between old and new schools, not in literary criticism only, but in every other department of philosophy, came to be more and more Coleridge's office. His enormous reading and his quickly inflamed historical sympathy made him see things from more than one side, which was well, but kept him from seeing any one side steadily, which was unfortunate. He thus became in his later years, and was already becoming when he wrote that letter, the first of nineteenth-century reactionaries, and one of the very few really great men who had recourse to mysticism as a check to rational thought. Wordsworth's mysticism, if indeed it can be so called, was of the imagination rather than the reason; it spent itself in " Tintern Abbey," the " Intimations " Ode, and other works of his poetic prime, and did not pass over into the religious philosophy of his later age. If he was then orthodox, his orthodoxy was Christian rationalism, not Christian mysticism, and, perhaps, neither rational nor mystical Christianity. It must be admitted that as a moderator in criticism Coleridge made some sensible practical amendments to Wordsworth's theory. And what he wrote for the world in " Biographia Literaria " can be only a hundredth part of the wise counsel he gave Wordsworth in private. Moderators of opinion are often useful, but the glory or the shame belongs to partisans. In this case, in spite of Coleridge's assertion and the truth of his assertion, that the Preface was half a child of his own brain, its warrior sire was Wordsworth.

So close was the mutual dependence of the two poets in 1802 and 1803 that we must revert for a moment to the former year, and note that, whether for good or ill, Coleridge was absent from the Wordsworths for many weeks. After their departure in July, he plucked up

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enough resolution to make a very jolly nine days' tour alone, visiting Buttermere and Wastdale, and climbing Scafell. From early in November till Christmas Eve he was away, most of the time in Wales with Thomas Wedgwood. On that day he turned up at Grasmere, and heard of the birth of his daughter, born the previous morning. Wedgwood had come north with him, and was staying at Glenridding, on Ullswater. Kirkstone Pass now took the place of Dunmail Raise as the barrier to be surmounted every few days. But before long Coleridge had gone to London, where he spent some time, until well into April, with the Lambs. He was in their house when Mary Lamb had one of her relapses into madness. On his departure he entrusted to Charles Lamb the task of seeing his forthcoming edition of poems through the press. His sufferings from neuralgia, or whatever his mysterious and painful disease may have been, kept his mind fixed on a foreign residence, in a southern climate, in Portugal, Malta, the West Indies, Madeira, even Hungary; but poverty and irresolution held him fast. It was probably his restlessness, more than Wordsworth's fondness for travel, that first made them think of the next step they took together, their tour in Scotland. The first intimation we have of this occurs in a letter from Coleridge to Southey in July, 1803; apropos of a projected "Bibliotheca Britannica," he asks: "If I go into Scotland, shall I engage Walter Scott to write the history of the Scottish poets?"* There is only one of Wordsworth's poems of which it is fairly safe to say that it was written in the spring of 1803, and that is "The Green Linnet," which certainly shows no trace of restlessness, but, on the contrary, a "settled low content."

Yet we must admit that he was capable of yielding at about the same time to a very different mood, if his own ascription of the lines beginning "It is no spirit who from heaven hath flown" is correct. They express an ambition of the most sky-reaching kind. Wordsworth seldom gives way to a certain impulse to which not a

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 426.

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few of the so-called Romantic poets of a slightly later time yielded, often with entire lack of reserve. Byron, Shelley, Hugo, did not hesitate to announce their belief in themselves as superior beings. So often do they repeat, in one way or another, their enormous claim, that we acquiesce not only, or not perhaps wholly, in our conscious minds, but rather as if overcome by the power of suggestion. Even Hugo ceases at length to appear immodest. Wordsworth was a match for any of them in pride, but so carefully does he in general restrain himself that we feel a shock on reading these verses. The sons of Zebedee might not so much have displeased the other disciples if their request had not been out of keeping with the general humility of their demeanour. The piece is a bold aspiration after eminence and unreproved freedom. The poet beholds the evening star shining alone while yet it is broad daylight, and is startled with the thought that perchance he may thus some day stand detached from his fellow-mortals. That the verses were inspired by earthly ambition, and not, as some have supposed, by a longing for heaven, is especially plain in one of the variant readings of lines 9-12—viz.:

> O most ambitious Star! thy presence brought
> A startling recollection to my mind
> Of the distinguished few among mankind,
> Who dare to step beyond their natural race.

About this time he also wrote a much greater poem, the verses to little Hartley Coleridge, six years old, which begin "O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought." The small group of poems in which Wordsworth directly addresses living persons among his friends are almost all of superior quality, serious, exquisitely elaborated, and show an intimate and loving knowledge of the persons to whom they are dedicated. A kind of epigrammatic perfection is attained in the prophetic lines:

> I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
> Lord of thy house and hospitality;
> And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
> But when she sate within the touch of thee.

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This figure of Grief, as an obtrusive lover, not to be got rid of, not able to take herself away from her victim, haunts the mind as a thing seen and shuddered at.

Thomas De Quincey, at that time an unwilling schoolboy of seventeen, was even more completely carried off his feet by "Lyrical Ballads" than John Wilson had been. On May 31, 1803, he wrote to the author through Longman and Rees, the publishers. The letter did not reach Wordsworth till July 27. Some boyish charm, heightened by contrast with precocity of judgment, it must have had, for Wordsworth answered it at once, and in terms of great kindness, even inviting his unknown correspondent to visit him.* But, evidently in reply to a too enthusiastic overture, he gives him a warning which De Quincey long afterwards had occasion to remember: "My friendship it is not in my power to give. This is a gift which no man can make; it is not in our power. A sound and healthy friendship is the growth of time and circumstance. It will spring up and thrive like a wild-flower when these favour, and when they do not, it is in vain to look for it." In this letter he announces: "I am going with my friend Coleridge and my sister upon a tour into Scotland for six weeks or two months. . . . Most likely we shall set off in a few days."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 147.

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CHAPTER XX

TOUR IN SCOTLAND

AND set off they did, although Mrs. Wordsworth had on June 18 given birth to a son, who was named John. Almost on the eve of their departure Dorothy wrote as follows to her friend Mrs. Clarkson:*

"GRASMERE,
"*15th July* [1803].

"[The baby] has a very prominent nose, which *will be* like his Father's, and a head shaped upon the very same model. I send you a lock of his hair sewed to this letter. To-day we have all been at Church. Mary was *churched* and the babe christened. Coleridge, my Brother Richard, and I were Godfathers and Godmother. Old Mr. Sympson answered for my Brother Richard, and had a hearty enjoyment of the christening cake, tea, and coffee this afternoon. The child sleeps all night, and is a very good sleeper in the day. I wish you could see him in his Basket, which is neither more nor less than a Meat Basket, which cost half a crown. In this Basket he has floated over Grasmere water asleep, not like Moses in his cradle of Rushes, but in a boat, mind that, and made one of a dinner-party at the Island, and we often carry it to the orchard-seat, where he drops asleep beside us. . . . C. is much better in health and spirits than he has been for some time past. We expect to set off on our Scotch tour in about ten days. William and C. talk of it with thorough enjoyment, and I have no doubt I shall be as happy as they when I am fairly off, but I do not love to think of leaving home and parting with the dear Babe, who will be no more the same Babe when we return,—besides, Sara does not come. This is a sad mortification to us, particularly as she had given us the

* From the hitherto unpublished original, in the British Museum.

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strongest reason to expect her. However, we shall hope for Joanna, who can be very easily spared from Gallow Hill. Dear Mary does not look forward to being left alone with one gloomy thought,—indeed, how should she, with so sweet a babe at her breast? But both for her sake and Sara's we earnestly wished that they might have been together. You will rejoice to hear that the affair with Lord Lowther is entirely settled, except for signing receipts and releases and a few law forms. We are to receive eight thousand five hundred pounds. The whole of the money is to be paid in a year. I cannot tell you yet what our shares will be, as there will be some deductions."

The Scottish tour has been as adequately described as any journey ever made. It furnished Wordsworth with subjects for more than a dozen poems, Coleridge with grievances and pleasures for some wonderful letters, and Dorothy with material for an unsurpassed book of prose description. Her "Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland" were written after their return, from copious notes taken day by day. The Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals were memorials for her brother and herself only; these fuller and more finished pages were intended to serve the further purpose of entertaining the wider family circle. Fragments of them were printed in the "Memoirs," and the book as a whole was published for the first time by Principal Shairp, in 1874, and again by Professor Knight, in 1904. In style it is a perfect model of simple, natural, and effective English. There is here absolutely no literary affectation. A very great effort is made to describe things accurately, but the writing evidently differs in no respect from the language Dorothy Wordsworth would have employed in telling the tale orally, except that it is, of course, more deliberate and careful. The freedom permitted by this form of composition enabled her to show her interest in a wide range of subjects—gardening, agriculture, architecture, economic conditions, national and local traits, incidents of human life, customs, dress, peculiarities of speech, and the emotions excited by all these things in herself and her companions. She shows a lively and

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good-natured humour combined with ready sympathy, but, above all, she was interested, and it is evident that her brother was equally interested, in landscape. Her descriptions of the face of the country, whether in close detail or in broken aspects, are, I think, unrivalled. She knew, as Ruskin and many other famous describers have not so well known, how to exclude her feelings and report what her eyes actually saw. Though upon occasion she could, after the manner of her brother and of other poets since the world began, infuse her soul into her senses, and reproduce the impression of "both what they half create and half perceive," she kept the processes distinct, and seems to have worked upon the principle that material truth and imaginative truth should not be blended without due warning.

Though the tour was, in the old-fashioned sense of the term, a sentimental journey, there is not a trace of sentimentality in her account. Even in the presence of ruined monastic buildings, which are wont to awaken lachrymose and futile regrets, she maintains her composure. We are still a long way, in her case at least, from the cult of mediævalism. She is a creature of the eighteenth century, and does not see the past through a mist of tears and romantic doctrine. In general, she reserves her softness for human distress and accepts results of history with a somewhat hard-headed complacency. It requires a magnifying-glass to distinguish either in her or in her brother, up to this time, certain of the characteristic marks of Romanticism—its reactionary view of history, its sentimentality, and its tendency to claim in behalf of the illuminated a morality less rigorous than that which binds the rest of mankind.

Some idea of the conversation while Coleridge was yet of the party may be gained from their remarks upon a great mine-pump, whose arm they observed heaving upward every half-minute. "There would have been something in this object very striking in any place, as it was impossible not to invest the machine with some faculty of intellect; it seemed to have made the first

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step from brute matter to life and purpose, showing its progress by great power. William made a remark to this effect, and Coleridge observed that it was like a giant with one idea." Her own observant and contented mind is shown in her remark: "I can always walk over a moor with a light foot; I seem to be drawn more closely to nature in such places than anywhere else; or rather I feel more strongly the power of nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself for being able to find enjoyment in what unfortunately to many persons is either dismal or insipid."

It is amusing to think how little effect the metaphysics of Coleridge had upon her. It is not fanciful to suppose that he must have chafed at the absorbed interest the Wordsworths took in nature solely for its own sake. This interest was not that of mere amateurs; it had a systematic, a professional quality.

As throwing light on Wordsworth's character, his tastes, his personal traits, the "Recollections" are invaluable. The Grasmere Journal shows him amid familiar surroundings, at his ease. In Scotland he was engaged in strange activities, facing all sorts of practical difficulties, and stimulated by fresh impulses every day. What strikes one most, in this account, is his faculty—and his sister's too, for they were as one person in this—for getting at the heart of things. The annoyances and distractions of travel affected them little. Every sunrise was to them the beginning of an adventure, a new life, like the dawn of a child's holiday. It is hardly too much to say that nothing commonplace happened to them during those six weeks. If the sky was blue, that was a miracle; if rain fell and ways were foul, that was wonderful too. They were not real children of the road, however, not free denizens of the world; they carried in their memory a standard for all they saw. They were constantly comparing Scottish lochs with English lakes, Scottish straths with English vales. Just as they measured one or two great rocks with "William's walking-stick," to see if they were as tall as the "bowder-stone" in Borrowdale, so they studied Highlands and

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Lowlands from a Cumbrian point of view. One is struck with their great physical endurance and their cheerful acceptance of hardships. They were constantly faced with the possibility of not finding a lodging for the night. William had to sleep more than once in haylofts, and Dorothy on the carriage cushions in a hovel. As for food, they had to put up with what the poor Highlanders happened to have in their huts—porridge, oatcake, and whey, and deemed themselves lucky if search produced a few eggs. A boiled fowl was a boon. More than once they had to wait for their supper among drunken drovers. They showed an admirable power of adapting themselves to circumstances and people, neither holding themselves aloof nor expecting too much. Even in the Lowlands the state of the roads and inns would justify one in calling the country wild. They saw only one stage-coach in all Scotland. The people, both Lowland and Highland, though almost uniformly kind and honest, were often in a condition of material backwardness, the like of which can scarcely be found now anywhere in Europe or America. Coleridge, though he was no mean long-distance walker, suffered from fatigue and privation. The hardier Wordsworths were undaunted. Through mud and rain, across desolate moors and dangerous ferries, they struggled on, and it must have been a wild-looking pair that wandered through Edinburgh High Street towards the middle of September. It is little wonder they remained in the Old Town, avoiding the fashionable crowds of Princes Street.

In specific biographical details the "Recollections" are, of course, very rich, but the little book is so charming that it would be a pity to attempt to cull them out. Every lover of Wordsworth should read the original. I may be permitted, however, to make a few general observations, and to call attention to one or two points which might escape notice.

They set out, Coleridge and William and Dorothy Wordsworth, with one horse and an Irish jaunting-car. It was expected that there would be at least as much

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walking as driving, and so there was. It was expected also that the three should keep together, but on August 29, by the shore of Loch Long, " poor Coleridge," to quote Miss Wordsworth, " being very unwell, determined to send his clothes to Edinburgh and make the best of his way thither, being afraid to face much wet weather in an open carriage." Various other reasons, more or less whimsical, but connected generally with the state of his health, have been given by Coleridge himself, who seems to imply that his companions were to blame. He wrote to Poole, October 3, 1803:* " Wordsworth, himself a brooder over his hypochondriacal sensations, was not my fittest travelling companion." But there need be no mystery about it. The wonder is that he could so long have stuck to a plan and endured so much hardship. The surprise comes when we discover that, instead of turning back, he made a short-cut to the North, outstripping his former comrades, and preceding them over a part of their route. If his report is correct, he walked a prodigious distance, going as far as Inverness.

In " Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers " (p. 205) occurs the following passage:

" Early in the present century, I set out on a tour in Scotland, accompanied by my sister; but an accident which happened to her prevented us from going as far as we had intended. During our excursion we fell in with Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth, and Coleridge, who were, at the same time, making a tour in a vehicle that looked very like a cart. Wordsworth and Coleridge were entirely occupied in talking about poetry; and the whole care of looking out for cottages where they might get refreshment and pass the night, as well as of seeing their poor horse fed and littered, devolved upon Miss Wordsworth. She was a most delightful person, so full of talent, so simple-minded, and so modest! If I am not mistaken, Coleridge proved so impracticable a travelling-companion that Wordsworth and his sister were at last obliged to separate from him."

Rogers must have based the last statement on hearsay; not that it is incorrect, however, for in the " Memoirs "

* " Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 120.

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(Vol. I., p. 209) Bishop Wordsworth quotes his uncle as saying: "Coleridge was at that time in bad spirits and somewhat too much in love with his own dejection, and he departed from us, as is recorded in my sister's journal, shortly after we left Loch Lomond."

It is too bad that the poets should be deprived of such credit as they deserve for their care of "the poor horse." The animal was almost entirely in Wordsworth's charge, who appears to have been the only one of the three travellers capable of driving. He drove it badly, to be sure, letting it back down hillsides and tangle itself in the harness; but still, he drove. Coleridge never assumed this responsibility, and was wise enough to lead instead of holding the reins. There is more than one touching vision granted us in the "Recollections," of Wordsworth standing guard over "the poor horse" while it ate its corn in tavern-stables, and once he is reported to have tried, though in vain, to unyoke it. Rogers had very little opportunity of judging of these fine points, for the more veridical Miss Wordsworth reduces to a few minutes the period in which he could have made his observations. Under date of August 17 she writes: "Reached Dumfries at about nine o'clock—market-day; met crowds of people on the road, and everyone had a smile for us and our car. . . . The inn was a large house, and tolerably comfortable; Mr. Rogers and his sister, whom we had seen at our own cottage at Grasmere a few days before, had arrived there that same afternoon on their way to the Highlands; but we did not see them till the next morning, and only for about a quarter of an hour." To a man so prosperous as Rogers and so accustomed all his life to comfortable living, the frugality of the Wordsworths appeared to denote penury. In P. W. Clayden's "Rogers and his Contemporaries" (I. 9) there is the following passage from Rogers's diary, written at Ambleside, August 8: "Rode to Grasmere Church and returned by Wordsworth's Cottage;" and on August 9: "Drank tea with Wordsworth and Coleridge." The following anecdote, which is related immediately after the one I have quoted,

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from "Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers," may or may not refer to a meeting with Lord Lonsdale shortly after the above-mentioned call at Grasmere:

"I was walking with Lord Lonsdale on the terrace at Lowther Castle, when he said, 'I wish I could do something for poor Campbell.' My rejoinder was, 'I wish you would do something for poor Wordsworth, who is in such straitened circumstances that he and his family deny themselves animal food several times a week.' Lord Lonsdale was the more inclined to assist Wordsworth because the Wordsworth family had been hardly used by the preceding Lord Lonsdale; and he eventually proved one of his kindest friends."

It is undoubtedly Rogers whom Coleridge mentions in a letter* to Sir George Beaumont, dated Keswick, Friday, August 12:

"On Tuesday evening Mr. R——, the author of 'The —— of ——,' drank tea and spent the evening with us at Grasmere—and this had produced a very unpleasant effect on my spirits." And he proceeds to revile poor Rogers, concluding ill-naturedly: "Forgive me, dear Sir George, but I could not help being pleased that the man disliked you, and your lady, and he lost no time in letting us know it. If I believed it possible that the man liked me, upon my soul I should feel exactly as if I were tarred and feathered. I have a *cowardly* dread of being hated, even by bad men; but in this instance disgust comes to my assistance, and the greater dread of being called Friend."

The reason for this aversion is not far to seek. It is revealed three sentences farther down in the same letter, where Coleridge refers to Cowper's letters as if they had cleansed his mind from the memory of Rogers. It was very probably the air of free-thinking in the latter's conversation which offended Coleridge, who at this time was running frantically away from the shadow of his old self, and had found particular reasons for directing his flight towards Sir George.

At Dumfries the three travellers visited the grave of

* "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 2. Professor Knight has needlessly suppressed Rogers's name.

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Burns and his house, and were stirred to melancholy by the thought which must come to everyone who sees the squalid surroundings amid which so much manhood and genius were smothered. They called to mind his intemperance, and felt oppressed with fear lest his sons, suffering rather than benefiting from his fame, might yield to the same temptations which had beset him. It is a pleasure to observe that the tone of their reflections about Burns was one of sincere and almost humble admiration, qualified only by sorrow for his real faults, and not by any lack of appreciation of his poetic genius or his many virtues. They were, no doubt, like most people at that time, under the influence of Dr. Currie's dismal "Life," and it is not strange that Dorothy should have written, on catching a glimpse of Ellisland, the scene of one of Burns's vain endeavours: "There is no thought surviving in connection with Burns's daily life that is not heart-depressing." Wordsworth felt a poignant regret that he had not known Burns. Dorothy's pages should be read in conjunction with the poem "To the Sons of Burns," if one would appreciate the genuine solicitude of a good man which it expresses. The other poem, "At the Grave of Burns," is the most precious tribute ever paid to Burns, and one of the greatest elegies in our language. It is plainly, too, a cry of personal grief:

> Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
> By Skiddaw seen,—
> Neighbours we were, and loving friends
> We might have been.

Overcome by this thought and by the melancholy surroundings, which forced upon their attention the unhappy side of Burns's life, the three pilgrims withdrew in sadness from the scene, but to Wordsworth's heart of hearts voices of consolation spoke:

> Sighing I turned away; but ere
> Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
> Music that sorrow comes not near,
> A ritual hymn
> Chanted in love that casts out fear
> By Seraphim.

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Whether it was that they dreaded the expense, or felt ill at ease in their rustic attire amid townsmen, or cared too much for natural beauty, the travellers stayed only one night in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh. It is singular enough that the Wordsworths should have been willing to leave home at all, considering that little John was but two months old; it is odder still that mention is made only once of their inquiring for letters. They were, apparently, cut off for many days together in the Highlands, and not pursuing always a prearranged course. They gave neither themselves nor their horse a Sunday rest, which must have scandalized the Scots. And, indeed, it does not seem to have been their custom to attend church when at home, or to make any distinction among the days of the week, whether at Racedown or at Alfoxden or at Town-end. The tradition of Wordsworth's church-going habits dates from a much later period. In this connection, it may be observed that Dorothy's Journal up to this time, and the letters of herself and her brother, are noticeably free from the religious musings—I am tempted to say the cant—which were usual in diaries and letters generally throughout the early half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps Rogers—he knew everybody and was kind to everybody—gave them a letter of introduction to Scott. Lockhart, who got his information partly from a conversation with Wordsworth and hearing him read extracts from Dorothy's Journal, in 1836, says:

"Their common acquaintance, Stoddart, had so often talked to them of each other, that they met as if they had not been strangers; and they parted friends. Mr. and Miss Wordsworth had just completed that tour in the Highlands, of which so many incidents have since been immortalized, both in the poet's verse and in the hardly less poetical prose of his sister's Diary."*

After tearing themselves unwillingly away from Edinburgh and seeing Hawthornden, the house of the poet Drummond, whither Ben Jonson came on foot from

* "Life of Sir Walter Scott," II. 160.

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London to visit him, the travellers put themselves for six days in " the Shirra's " capable hands. The meeting of Scott and Wordsworth is memorable in literary annals. The wayfarers had risen early, on a fine morning, September 17, and had walked from Roslin through the glen and considerably farther to Lasswade. " Arrive at Lasswade," says the Journal, " before Mr. and Mrs. Scott had risen, and waited some time in a large sitting-room. Breakfasted with them, and stayed till two o'clock, and Mr. Scott accompanied us back almost to Roslin, having given us directions respecting our future journey, and promised to meet us at Melrose two days after." Wordsworth retained a lively recollection of that day. He told Lockhart of it:

" We were received with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the ' Lay of the Last Minstrel '; and the novelties of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

Even without Scott's presence they were to find themselves henceforth under his protection as long as they remained in Scotland. At Clovenford, for example, Dorothy writes: " On our mentioning Mr. Scott's name, the woman of the house showed us all possible civility. . . . But, indeed, Mr. Scott is respected everywhere; I believe that by favour of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout all the borders of Scotland." It was at Clovenford that Wordsworth wrote " Yarrow Unvisited." Scott was their guide through Melrose Abbey, having rejoined them on the 19th.

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"He was now travelling to the assizes at Jedburgh in his character of Sheriff of Selkirk, and on that account, as well as for his own sake, he was treated with great respect, a small part of which was vouchsafed to us as his friends, though I could not persuade the woman [at the inn at Melrose] to show me the beds, or to make any sort of promise till she was assured from the Sheriff himself that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with William."

At Jedburgh they witnessed some of the official ceremonies in which their new friend was engaged, and when he was free from court duties he accompanied them through part of his beloved border-country, a little way beyond Hawick. Thence they proceeded through Teviotdale to Langholm, Longtown, and Carlisle, and so home, where on September 25, "a beautiful autumnal day," they found "Mary in perfect health, Joanna Hutchinson with her, and little John asleep in the clothes-basket by the fire." Their thoughts had flown ahead of them, and between Dalston and Grasmere Wordsworth had composed the sonnet beginning:

> Fly, some kind Harbinger, to Grasmere-dale!
> Say that we come, and come by this day's light.

Soon after their return Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson as follows:*

"GRASMERE,
"*Sunday, October 9th* [1803].

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"It is a fortnight this day since we returned home after an absence from Mary and the Babe of six weeks, a long, long absence it seemed to be, though we were very happy during our tour, particularly the last month, for at first we were but half weaned from home, and had not learnt the way of enjoying ourselves. We seemed to consider the whole tour as a business to be by us performed for some good end or other, but when we had fairly got forward the rambling disposition came upon us, and we were sorry to turn back again, or rather we wished to go forward. We had a joyful meeting. Mary, though thin, was quite well, and John had thriven and grown to our very heart's contentment. . . . I

* From the original manuscript in the British Museum.

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blame myself that I never once wrote one word to you or Mary, for it was out of my power to write unless I had had a thousand times more activity and strength than I am mistress of, for I was always tired when I reached the inn at night, and glad to put my body in the state to receive all possible enjoyment of the few comforts a Scotch inn affords. I was glad to lay my legs up and loll in indolence before the fire. [Here follows a paragraph, to be quoted later, on her brother's drilling as a volunteer.] We have not seen Coleridge since our return. He is taking a violent medicine in the hope of bringing his disease to a fit of the gout. M. would tell you that we parted with him at Loch Lomond. He performed miracles after we left him in the way of walking, which proves an uncommon strength somewhere, but he is often dreadfully ill. William's head was very much amended by our tour, and much we both enjoyed ourselves. I was never so well scarcely in my life, till I over-fatigued myself with walking, having left the gig to make an excursion on foot, and I was not so well as I could have wished at my return. . . . Everybody asks, Do you like the Scotch or the English lakes better? A question I do not like to answer. There is no comparison where everything is so different, except a part of Loch Lomond, which is like Ullswater, but there is certainly nothing so beautiful in Scotland as parts of this country."

Coleridge's story of the separation in the Highlands does not represent it in a very different light from the account given by Miss Wordsworth. In a doleful letter to his wife, written at the Ferry of Ballater about September 1,* he complains that "Wordsworth's hypochondriacal feelings keep him silent and self-centred." This is a more than poetical metonymy, for, after all, the greatest demand Coleridge made on the patience of his friends, both now and hereafter, was caused neither by his native irresolution, nor by his misuse of drugs, nor by his habit of borrowing money, but by his constant fretting over his health. This is not to say that he was not a great sufferer; their knowledge of how he suffered made them wonderfully patient. He tells Mrs. Coleridge he had had an attack of rheumatism

* E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 431.

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in his head at the very place, near Loch Lomond, where the Wordsworths enjoyed themselves more than in any other part of their tour, the place where they met the "sweet Highland Girl." "And now William," he continues, "proposed to me to leave them and make my way on foot to Loch Katrine, the Trossachs, whence it is only twenty miles to Stirling, where the coach runs through to Edinburgh. He and Dorothy resolved to fight it out. I eagerly caught at the proposal; for the *sitting* in an open carriage in the rain is death to me, and somehow or other I had not been quite comfortable."

In dividing the common fund, the Wordsworths, being two and purposing to make much the longer journey, naturally took the larger share, and Coleridge was left with six guineas, which would have been quite enough to take him back to Keswick had he pursued his original intention. But no sooner was he alone than the sense of liberty revived his spirits, and he set out to see Glencoe and the north of Scotland! "I am now going," he writes, "to cross the ferry for Fort William, for I have resolved to eke out my cash by all sorts of self-denial, and to walk along the *whole line of the Forts*. I am unfortunately shoeless; there is no town where I can get a pair, and I have no money to spare to buy them, so I expect to enter Perth barefooted. I burnt my shoes in drying them at the boatman's hovel on Loch Katrine, and I have by this means hurt my heel. Likewise my left leg is a little inflamed, and the rheumatism in the right of my head afflicts me sorely when I begin to grow warm in my bed, chiefly my right eye, ear, cheek, and the three teeth; but, nevertheless, I am enjoying myself, having Nature with solitude and liberty—the liberty natural and solitary, the solitude natural and free." "I take no opiates," he adds.

On September 10 he wrote to Southey from Edinburgh: "I have walked 263 miles in eight days, so I must have strength somewhere, but my spirits are dreadful, owing entirely to the horrors of every night—I truly dread to sleep. It is no shadow with me, but substantial misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning

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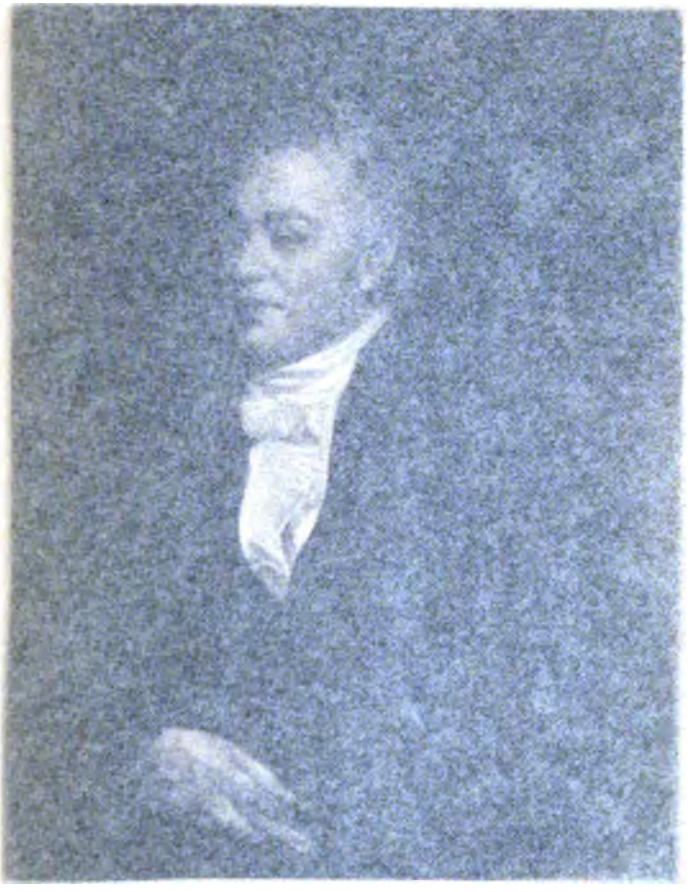

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very place, near Loch Lomond, ... enjoyed themselves more than ... tour, the place where they met the ... " "And now William," he ... to leave them and make my ... to Loch Katrine, the Trossachs, where it ... miles to Stirling, where the coach runs ... to Edinburgh. He and Dorothy resolved ... I eagerly caught at the proposal; for the ... open carriage in the rain is death to me, and ... somehow or other I had not been quite comfortable."

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Samuel Taylor Coleridge

from a portrait by J. Phillips R.A. in the possession of Mr. John Murray

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and cry." And in this letter he sends Southey the first copy of that heartbreaking poem "The Pains of Sleep," including three pathetic lines which for some reason he left out when he published it in 1816:

> Frail is my soul, yea, strengthless wholly,
> Unequal, restless, melancholy;
> But free from Hate and sensual Folly.

In a second letter to Southey, three days later, he remarks, perhaps a little wistfully, that Walter Scott is at Lasswade, a few miles from Edinburgh, and that he has seen his town house. His comment on Scottish scenery is much less enthusiastic than Miss Wordsworth's. And again he speaks of his dreadful fate: "I am tolerably well, meaning the day. My last night was not such a noisy night of horrors as three nights out of four are with me. O God! when a man blesses the loud screams of agony that awake him night after night, night after night, and when a man's repeated night screams have made him a nuisance in his own house, it is better to die than to live."

Of the devoted band, including Thomas Poole, the Wedgwoods, and Southey, who did what they could to help Coleridge, and who helped him most by loving him and listening to his harrowing descriptions of his torments, we must remember that the Wordsworths stood nearest to him. What happened in the Highlands was probably no new experience for them. In a letter of about this time, Coleridge speaks of "Mr. Wordsworth, who has seen me in all my illnesses for nearly four years."* The contrast with Scott, then in the full bloom of health, happiness, and activity, must have been at once welcome and painful. To this new friend Wordsworth wrote as follows, three weeks after his return:

"I had the pleasure of seeing Coleridge and Southey at Keswick last Sunday. Southey, whom I never saw much of before, I liked much: he is very pleasant in his manner, and a man of great reading in old books, poetry, chronicles, memoirs, etc., particularly Spanish and Portuguese. . . . My sister and I often talk of the happy

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 441.

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days that we spent in your company. Such things do not occur often in life. If we live, we shall meet again; that is my consolation when I think of these things. Scotland and England sound like divisions, do what we can; but we really are but neighbours, and if you were no further off, and in Yorkshire, we should think so. Farewell! God prosper you, and all that belongs to you! Your sincere friend, for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to anyone,—W. WORDSWORTH."*

Fifteen poems were the fruit of this tour. Some of them were not finished until long afterwards, and one, of quite inferior merit, entitled "The Departure," was not even suggested at the time. The others are "At the Grave of Burns," which was inspired, as we have seen, at Dumfries, and composed in large part before 1807; "Thoughts suggested the Day following, on the Banks of the Nith, now the Poet's Residence," which was not finished till 1839; "To the Sons of Burns after visiting the Grave of their Father," composed partly in 1803, and greatly altered in various editions; "To a Highland Girl," composed in 1803, and corresponding with peculiar exactness to the details of an experience related in Dorothy's Journal; "Glenalmain, or The Narrow Glen," composed probably in 1803; "Stepping Westward," composed between 1803 and 1805; "The Solitary Reaper," composed in the same period, and suggested not only by experiences of the poet himself, but more especially, as he acknowledged in a note, by a beautiful sentence in a manuscript of his friend Thomas Wilkinson, the Quaker farmer, entitled "Tours to the British Mountains";† "Address to Kilchurn Castle," begun in 1803 and finished long afterwards; "Rob Roy's Grave," composed between September, 1803, and April, 1807; a "Sonnet composed at —— Castle," composed September 18, 1803, and enclosed in

* "Memoirs," I. 256.

† Wilkinson's book was not published till 1824. The sentence, which refers to an incident observed near Loch Lomond, is as follows: "Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse, as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more."

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the letter to Scott already mentioned; "Yarrow Unvisited," composed in 1803; "The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband," composed between 1803 and 1805, though, as Dorothy says, long after seeing the persons described; "Fly, Some Kind Harbinger to Grasmere-Dale," composed September 25, 1803; and "The Blind Highland Boy, a Tale told by the Fireside, after returning to the Vale of Grasmere," a poem suggested long after the tour, but coloured by it in several details, as, for example, in stanzas 12, 13, and 14, which reproduce observations recorded by Dorothy.

The general poetic level of this series is high. Three at least of the number, "At the Grave of Burns," "The Solitary Reaper," and "Yarrow Unvisited," are among Wordsworth's best achievements. Even if they stood alone, they would indicate a remarkably wide range of power. The value of the tour, considered as a stage in Wordsworth's artistic development, is chiefly in the fact that it invited him to a fresh field of observation, unconnected with his past life. Yet, of course, the principles which he had learned to apply to nature and to human life were applicable to this field as well as to the familiar scenes around Grasmere. He could still carry out his central plan of self-development, which was to retain undiminished and uncorrupted the lively feelings of childhood and the pure ideals of youth, while attaching them, by means of manhood's riper knowledge and more deliberate will, to objects of permanent and universal experience. Here and there, in these new poems, we feel something of the freedom and irresponsible gaiety of a happy wayfarer, oftener still the lively and romantic spirit of Scotland. Sentiment, when it is not restrained altogether, is expressed with greater *abandon* by Scots than by the English. Adopting Burns's favourite form of stanza, Wordsworth follows his example also in opening wide the flood-gate of feeling. Similarly, for "Yarrow Unvisited," he took a reeling kind of Scottish melody, which is heard in several old ballads, and made it carry a certain gay wilfulness foreign to his own, and, indeed, to English character in general.

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CHAPTER XXI

NEW INFLUENCES

A NEW current had begun to flow into Wordsworth's life shortly before he set out on the Scottish tour. It was an influence destined to alter profoundly his character and his art. That the acceptance of patronage affects the relation of the recipient to his benefactor is a rule of nature. The utmost delicacy of the giver and the proudest independence of the receiver never suffice to annul it altogether. There is a difference between accepting pecuniary aid offered by an old friend, on purely personal grounds, and accepting it as bounty from a stranger or a person of superior rank, as a retaining fee, so to speak, for work not yet accomplished. No doubt immense contributions to art have been rendered possible by patronage. But the tendency and spirit of the work have never been quite the same after the artist has accepted the obligation. No poet could have wished for a more high-minded patron than Sir George Beaumont. It was natural for a man of his great wealth to think that Wordsworth's narrow means were poverty, and that he might achieve more if relieved from the necessity of rigorous thrift. His benefactions were not alarmingly large, and no doubt they were not only prompted by genuine kindness, but proffered most delicately. He was himself a fellow-artist, and there were abundant grounds for the friendship that sprang up between him and Wordsworth. Nevertheless, in Wordsworth's letters to him there is perceptible an effort to adapt himself to a new point of view. To most of his correspondents Wordsworth had been stiffly uncompromising. He wrote few letters, and in them

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there was usually a touch of almost rude independence. One would suppose from his long and frequent epistles to Sir George that at last he acknowledged a superior. Of course, it is not to be imagined that Wordsworth surrendered a particle of his self-respect. But that his attitude towards society was modified by this new relationship there can be scarcely any doubt, and in the end his art reflected the change.

The acquaintance began at Coleridge's house in the early part of August, 1803. The baronet, who had a wide circle of friends among literary men in London, had met Coleridge before, and had now come, with Lady Beaumont, to lodge with him at Greta Hall. On August 12, after their departure, Coleridge wrote them a curious letter:* "I have written a strange, rambling letter," he concludes; "for in truth I have written under a sort of perplexity of moral feeling,—my head prompting respect, my heart confident affectionateness; the one tells me it is my first letter to you, the other lets me know that unless I write to you as old friends I cannot write to you at all. Be so good therefore as with your wonted kindness to think of this letter as of a sort of awkward *bow* on entering a room. I shall find myself more at my ease when I have sat down. Believe me, I write every-day words with no every-day feeling, when I subscribe myself, dear Sir George and dear Lady Beaumont, with affectionate esteem, your obliged and grateful S. T. COLERIDGE."

Sir George had done something to account for this flutter. He had bought and presented to Wordsworth a piece of land, Applethwaite, near Keswick, in the hope that the poet would build on it, and thus be able to live nearer Coleridge. Wordsworth did not acknowledge this generous act till eight weeks later.† He then—October 14—excused his delay as follows: "Owing to a set of painful and uneasy sensations which I have, more or less, at all times about my chest, I deferred writing to you, being at first made still more uncomfortable by travelling, and loathing to do violence to myself, in

* "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 1. † "Memoirs," I. 261.

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what ought to be an act of pure pleasure and enjoyment, viz., the expression of my deep sense of your goodness." The letter is a singular exhibition of nervous hesitation, and makes one suspect that Coleridge was, indeed, not far wrong in thinking his friend a hypochondriac. The outcome is that Wordsworth keeps the Applethwaite property, though declining to build on it, partly because of the state of his own affairs, " and still more from the improbability of Mr. Coleridge's remaining in the country." It was Coleridge's conviction at this time that nothing but removal to a hot climate would save his life. According to the Bishop of Lincoln,* Wordsworth sent with this letter three sonnets, one composed during the Scottish tour, at Nidpath, " Now as I Live I Pity that Great Lord "; " Vanguard of Liberty, Ye Men of Kent "; and " Shout, for a mighty Victory is Won !" The third of these was an " anticipation " of the slaughter that awaited the French if they should set foot on British soil. It is also, unhappily, an anticipation of the strain of highly artificial ferocity which henceforth disfigures some of Wordsworth's political verse. The hard logic of events had made him feel that with all her abuses Britain was the bulwark of liberty. France, he thought, had lost all her titles to respect in embracing the tyrant Bonaparte. Under the necessity of doing his share to preserve his country's life, Wordsworth was willing to relinquish at last, and openly, his long-cherished principles and hopes. The days of his youth were ended.

Sir George was very much interested in military affairs, had raised a corps of infantry at Coleorton, another of pioneers at Dunmow in Essex, and had a share in another of infantry at Haverhill. Wordsworth is able to report to him: " At Grasmere, we have turned out almost to a man. We are to go to Ambleside on Sunday to be mustered, and put on, for the first time, our military apparel."

Coleridge, who returned from Scotland ten days before the Wordsworths, lost no time before writing

* " Memoirs," I. 263.

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to Sir George. In his letter of September 23* he states, by the way, that his poem "The Pains of Sleep" was written nine years before, when he had an attack of the same kind as that which he describes in his letter to Southey from Edinburgh. It is in this letter that he felicitously describes the style of Pascal as "a robe of pure light." Another epistle, dated October 1, is less admirable. It is as wild as a dream of delirium. But there is method in its madness; it is Coleridge's retractation of the generous "errors" of his earlier years. Robert Emmet had just been executed, at the age of twenty-four. "At that age, dear Sir George," writes Coleridge, "I was retiring from politics, disgusted beyond measure by the manners and morals of the Democrats, and fully awake to the inconsistency of my practice with my speculative principles." This statement—which is not true—leads him into reviewing his past. In a cataract of phrases, in sentences a page long, he betrays his fear that his Jacobinical conduct may rise up against him and cut him off from Sir George's friendship. Excuses, protests, renunciations, are poured forth in an utter abandonment of dignity or loyalty to old friends and old beliefs. The climax is reached in an outburst of terror *at what might have happened* if Emmet had succeeded, and then we have this conclusion, which explains much: "My honoured friends, as I live, I scarcely know what I have been writing; but the very circumstance of writing to *you*, added to the recollection of the unwise and unchristian feelings with which, at poor Emmet's age, *I* contemplated all persons of *your* rank in society, and that recollection confronted with my present feelings towards you, it has agitated me, dear friends, and I have written, my heart at a full gallop down hill." Surely this is apostasy, and there is unhappy significance in the fact that it is made at the feet of a baronet who was known to be a rich patron of letters. We are glad Wordsworth was not so precipitate, even though it would have been more polite not to wait eight weeks to render thanks for the gift of an estate.

* "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 6.

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There is a curious passage in Coleridge's notebook ("Anima Poetæ," p. 29), under date of October 26, 1803, from which it may be inferred that he still considered Wordsworth "a semi-atheist." Evidently the latter refused to assent to the old-fashioned teleological argument for the existence of God, and spoke of nature in such terms as to provoke a suspicion that he was a Pantheist. Coleridge was at this time so weary of speculative wandering, and so eager to make a short-cut to certitude and peace by attributing to God the qualities of a man raised to perfection, which is the well-known process of theology, that it distressed him to find Wordsworth willing to pursue still his old independent course. He writes:

"A most unpleasant dispute with Wordsworth and Hazlitt. I spoke, I fear, too contemptuously; but they spoke so irreverently, so malignantly, of the Divine Wisdom that it overset me. [Here follows a tirade against Hazlitt.] But *thou*, dearest Wordsworth—and what if Ray, Durham, Paley, have carried the observation of the aptitude of things too far, too habitually into pedantry? Oh, how many worse pedantries! how few so harmless, with so much efficient good! Dear William, pardon pedantry in others, and avoid it in yourself, instead of scoffing and reviling at pedantry in good men and a good cause—even by that very act becoming one. But, surely, always to look at the superficies of objects for the purpose of taking delight in their beauty, and sympathy with their real or imagined life, is as deleterious to the health and manhood of intellect as always to be peering and unravelling contrivance may be to the simplicity of the affection and the grandeur and unity of the imagination. Oh, dearest William! would Ray or Durham have spoken of God as you spoke of nature?"

Incongruous as is the thought of Wordsworth in uniform, and odious as it is to see him in a bloodthirsty mood, we must realize that the tide has turned. In a letter of October 9, to Mrs. Clarkson, Dorothy writes:

"William had gone to volunteer his services with the greatest part of the men of Grasmere. Alas! Alas!

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Mary and I have no other hope than that they will not be called upon, out of these quiet, far-off places, except in case of the French being successful after their first landing, and in that case what matter? We may all go together. But we wanted him to wait till the body of the people should be called. For my part, I thought much of the inconvenience and fatigue of going to be exercised twice or thrice a week. However, if he really enters into it heart and soul, and likes it, that will do him good; and surely there never was a more determined hater of the French, nor one more willing to do his utmost to destroy them if they really do come."*

Wordsworth's feelings on this subject are amply expressed in his "Lines on the Expected Invasion, 1803." He wrote but a few short pieces before the end of the year, and some of these were sent by Sir George Beaumont to the newspapers.

Coleridge's health, meanwhile, had given his friends increased anxiety. On November 13 Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson:†

"We had a long letter from Coleridge, written in the languor of the first moments of ease after suffering the various tortures of toothache, teeth-drawing, rheumatism, sickness, pains in the bowels, diarrhœa, and, worst of all, a shortness of breath which has lately attacked him on the return of damp weather. His spirits and strength are yet wonderful. Ill as he was on Friday, I should not wonder, if the weather were fine, should he walk over to Grasmere before Wednesday; he has intended coming for some time past, but has been prevented by one ugly attack or another. The christening of C.'s children took place last Tuesday. I had been very unwell a short time before, so William and Mary were afraid of trusting me amongst so much company, so I was obliged to request that they would find a proxy for me. William intended going, but, unfortunately, was so ill on that day that he could not possibly attend. Derwent, who you know Coleridge used always to say was my favourite, is our Godson."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 150. The rest of this letter, hitherto unpublished, has been, most of it, already quoted on p. 63.

† From the original manuscript in the British Museum.

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Two months later she writes to Mrs. Clarkson again:*

"*January* 15, 1804.

"(The first letter I have written in this new year.)

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I received your last letter the day before Coleridge came to us with Derwent, intending to spend a few days only here, and proceed to Devonshire either by Bristol or London. Day after day he was detained, by sickness or bad weather, or both (for when the weather was damp or wet he never failed to be very ill), and yesterday he left us in indifferent health, though on a fine sunny morning. He remained undetermined for a long time by which road he should go, and I had always a strong hope that he would see you at Bristol; but he intends to stay a short time in London before he goes into Devonshire, and on his road to London he will stop a few days at Liverpool. It was the uncertainty about poor Coleridge which has made me thus long in writing to you. . . . Derwent is still with us, and very sorry we shall be to part with him, but we must send him by the first opportunity, as he has now been nearly a month absent from his mother. He is sweet-tempered and very affectionate, fond of hanging about one's knees, telling stories, repeating little songs, etc., etc. . . . But I must tell you about Coleridge. He walked to Kendal yesterday. William accompanied him almost to Troutbeck, and C. was not tired when [William] parted from him, but two or three days before [he] was lame with the gout, stomach-sick, haunted by ugly dreams, screamed out in the night, dared not sleep, etc., etc. He still thinks that nothing but a warm climate *can* restore him to health. I have told you that he was the cause of my not writing. The uncertainty in which we were respecting him—that alone perhaps would not have prevented me; but I had so much uneasiness about him and *so much to do* that I seemed to have scarcely the quiet and leisure necessary to make me feel fit to write a letter that would give you any comfort. Mary had a very bad cold most of the time, which weakened her and made her unable to take an equal share with me in the business of the house. Molly was poorly, Coleridge continually wanting coffee, broth, or something or other. The bed was moved into the sitting-room night and morning, and with Derwent and

* From the original manuscript in the British Museum.

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the littlest of Johnnys you may think we were busy enough in our small house. We have given over even thinking about invasion, though our Grasmere volunteers do walk past the door thrice a week in their red coats to be exercised at Ambleside." [We learn from a letter of February 13 that Derwent stayed till the 3rd of that month.]

Arrangements were made for Coleridge to join Stoddart, a friend of Charles Lamb, who had gone out to Malta as King's Advocate. The ever-helpful Poole was in London, and Coleridge, unhappy at home, and eager to go south, started on December 20 to be with him. He had got as far as Dove Cottage when a severe illness brought him low, and he had to remain there, nursed by the Wordsworths, for about three weeks. Once away from his uncongenial wife, he was less in a hurry to reach Malta, and what with an engagement at the *Courier* office, two visits to the Beaumonts at their place in Essex, and much time with several old friends—Tobin, Davy, Godwin, Lamb, and others—he did not sail before April 9.* Wordsworth, out of his very slender means, and at a time when his own needs must have been pressing, lent him £100; and lending in this case probably meant giving.† Before sailing he had another dreadful attack. The Wordsworths were greatly alarmed. The letters they wrote him in March and April show how they loved him. These are different from their letters to other persons, being full of the tenderest sentiments and most caressing terms. Believing Coleridge's life to have been in danger, Wordsworth writes:‡ "I will not speak of other thoughts that passed through me, but I cannot help saying that I would gladly

* J. Dykes Campbell, "Life of S. T. Coleridge," pp. 141-143.

† Campbell says Wordsworth lent him £100, and Sir George Beaumont gave him an equal amount. In the letter to Sir George ("Memorials of Coleorton," I. 41) of January 30, to which Campbell refers, Coleridge mentions only the loan: "Wordsworth," he says, "after an obstinate refusal on my part for more than four months, has at length, I may almost say, forced me to accept the loan of £100." In another letter, dated February 1, he appears to decline an offer of £100 from Sir George. But it is possible he changed his mind.

‡ "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 462.

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have given three-fourths of my possessions for your letter on 'The Recluse' at that time. I cannot say what a load it would be to me, should I survive you and you die without this memorial left behind." In a letter to Richard Sharp,* who had been kind to the wanderer, Wordsworth expressed his gratitude, and spoke of "our dear and honoured friend Coleridge."

In a letter to Thomas Wedgwood,† written in January, 1804, Coleridge gives an excruciating description of his sufferings in the previous month, and pays a tribute to the Wordsworths which should always be remembered to their credit:

"Wordsworth had, as I may truly say, forced on me a hundred pounds, in the event of my going to Madeira. . . . I stayed at Grasmere (Mr. Wordsworth's) a month, three-fourths of the time bed-ridden; and deeply do I feel the enthusiastic kindness of Wordsworth's wife and sister, who sat up by me, one or the other, in order to awaken me at the first symptoms of distressful feeling; and even when they went to rest, continued often and often to weep and watch for me even in their dreams. I left them January the 14th."

Several years later Wordsworth's patience was still far from exhausted, and Josiah Wedgwood wrote to Poole:‡ "Wordsworth tells me that he has heard little more from Coleridge than his other friends have; but he believes, if the state of his mind was known, his friends would be more inclined to pity than to blame him." Whether the note for £100 which Wordsworth endorsed for Coleridge§ is to be regarded as an addition to the "loan" mentioned above I do not know.

No philosophical tenet had been more precious to Coleridge than the doctrine of necessity. His moral nature had for a long time found rich sustenance in this apparently dry provender. Now, as if to complete the renunciation of his old faiths, he writes to Poole:

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 380.
† Cottle, "Reminiscences," p. 346.
‡ "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 177.
§ E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 492.

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"I love and honour you, Poole, for many things; scarcely for anything more than that, trusting firmly in the rectitude and simplicity of your own heart, and listening with faith to its revealing voice, you never suffered either my subtlety, or my eloquence, to proselyte you to the pernicious doctrine of Necessity. All praise to the Great Being, who has graciously enabled me to find my way out of that labyrinth-den of sophistry, and I would fain believe, to bring with me a better clue than has hitherto been known to enable others to do the same. I have convinced Southey and Wordsworth, and W., as you know, was, even to extravagance, a Necessitarian. Southey never believed, and abhorred the doctrine, yet thought the arguments for it unanswerable."*

To a superficial observer zeal for or against the doctrine of necessity may appear only a vain attempt to shoulder the responsibilities of the universe, or it may even have no serious meaning at all. But nothing else so clearly demonstrates Coleridge's possession of prophetic insight as the importance he attached to this subject. It was impossible to have done with the eighteenth century, philosophically, until at least a provisional hypothesis on this subject had been reached. Calvinism, with Deism, which is philosophically so closely akin to it, had to be disposed of. The scientific movement of the nineteenth century awaited a decision as to whether God was immanent and still creative in the world, or whether He had made it and left it, as a Great Artificer or Great First Cause only. If there was an immanent Idea working and becoming, then it might be that man was an experimental or intermediate organ of the divine nature, and thus possibly a free agent, since God was Himself free. Therefore moral philosophy was as deeply concerned as metaphysics with this problem. The course of political science likewise depended on its issue. In a sense the old-fashioned, orthodox view of human history as the irresistible working out of divine purpose —Bossuet's view—was necessitarian, so long as men believed in an unchangeable God carrying out eternal

* "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 122.

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decrees. Revolutionary thinkers, on the other hand, while standing up for what they deemed the natural and imprescriptible rights of man—a conception which savours of necessitarianism—were, in general, inclined to think of God as the product and end of history rather than as its cause. Godwin himself, the great advocate of necessity, looks more to the future than to the past for God. Widespread acceptance of the doctrine of necessity, with anything like a consistent working out of its implications, would have barred the nineteenth century against the systems of idealism, originating for the most part in Germany, which were the very soul of speculative thought for the next fifty or sixty years; would have hardened men's minds against scientific inquiry, and particularly against accepting the theory of evolution; would have discouraged anything but mere classification in psychology; would have enclosed the science of ethics in a Garden of Eden, and benumbed the practical moral sense of all except the unthinking or the inconsequent; and would have thrown theological obstructions in the way of political progress. Much of this happened, but against Coleridge's protest, and without encouragement from Wordsworth. Indeed, we have little more than Coleridge's several times repeated assertion to indicate that Wordsworth was a believer in necessity. However it may be with ordinary mortals, the artist feels himself to be a free agent.

As a speculative thinker Southey's powers were mediocre. But he was so worthy of respect as a man, so studious, learned, industrious, and productive, and withal so practical, that his residence henceforth at Keswick must have affected Wordsworth not a little. He had made the most complete right-about-face. From being a volatile and shallow Revolutionist, he had become a heavy and shallow Conservative. With Coleridge in Malta and Southey installed at Keswick, the change in the personal intercourse available to Wordsworth was one more push towards reaction.

The Wordsworths kept up communication with Cole-

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ridge as long as possible in the spring of 1804. In a letter of March 24 to Mrs. Clarkson, Dorothy says:*

"Judge, then, how fully we have been employed, what with nursing and the ordinary business of the house, which is really not a little, Molly being far worse qualified for her place as it is at present than formerly, having a deal of irregular work, and also her strength having considerably failed her. Poor lamb! we shall keep on with her as long as we can, for I believe she will be heart-broken when she leaves us. The last letter we had from Coleridge brought us but dismal tidings. [Here follows an account of his illness.] He wrote last Tuesday, and was to go to Portsmouth on Saturday He was at Sir George Beaumont's in Grosvenor Square, a blessed chance! for Lady Beaumont is as tender in her attentions to him as if she were his sister, and both Sir G. and she are human-hearted creatures, even as if they had been bred up and passed their lives among the best people of our own rank. C. has taken his passage in a ship bound to Venice and Trieste. He is to stop at Gibraltar and touch at Malta, where he will see our friend Stoddart, who has a place there under Government, and, with his wife, resides there. C. has not told us what his plans are, but most likely if his health be steady he will travel in Italy and perhaps visit Mount Etna. We expect Mrs. C. and the children at Grasmere after Mrs. Southey's confinement."

Early in 1804 Wordsworth wrote to Wrangham:† "I have great things in meditation, but as yet I have been doing little ones. At present I am engaged in a poem on my own earlier life, which will take five parts, or books, to complete; three of which are nearly finished. My other meditated works are a philosophical poem and a narrative one. These two will employ me some, I ought to say several, years; and I do not mean to appear before the world again as an author, till one of them at least be finished." In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, February 13,‡ Dorothy describes the manner of composing "The Prelude": "He takes out the umbrella,

* From the original manuscript in the British Museum.

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 156.

‡ *Ibid.*, 158. *The* umbrella is a precious piece of modern history. Umbrellas were still novelties.

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and I dare say stands stock-still under it, during many a rainy half-hour, in the middle of road or field!" In a letter of March 6, 1804, to his young admirer De Quincey, then at Oxford, the poet, after recommending the love of nature and books as a means of happiness and virtue, goes on to say that the poem on his own early life will be only tributary to a larger and more important work: "Of this larger work I have written one book and several scattered fragments; it is a moral and philosophical poem; the subject whatever I find most interesting in Nature, Man, and Society, and most adapted to poetic illustration. To this work I mean to devote the prime of my life and the chief force of my mind."* On March 24 Dorothy writes to Mrs. Clarkson that she and Mary are making a complete copy of her brother's poems "for poor Coleridge, to be his companion in Italy." "A great addition," she says, "to the poem on my brother's life has been made since C. left us, fifteen hundred lines." On September 8, evidently of the same year, Wordsworth tells Sir George Beaumont: "You will be glad to hear that I have been busily employed lately. I wrote one book of "The Recluse," nearly a thousand lines, then had a rest. Last week I began again, and have written three hundred more. I hope all tolerably well, and certainly with good views."† The introduction of "good views" in late stages of composition reduces considerably the biographical value of "The Prelude." It is unfortunate the work was not finished earlier and left untouched. Judging from Wordsworth's general practice, it is extremely probable that he "tinkered" with it all the rest of his life, tempering its boldness and removing features which he deemed inconsistent with the staid principles of his mature age. On Christmas Day, 1804, he tells Sir George that he has written upward of two thousand verses in the last ten weeks.‡

The short poems, written in 1804, are few, and more than one of them were of earlier inspiration. We have

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 159.

† *Ibid.*, 171. ‡ *Ibid.*, 173.

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considered the origin of " I wandered lonely as a cloud " and that of " Vaudracour and Julia." No longer having the testimony of Dorothy's Journal, we are thrown back upon Wordsworth's ascription of " She was a Phantom of Delight " and " The Affliction of Margaret ——" to this year. Four lines of the former, he tells us in the Fenwick note, were originally composed as part of the verses on the Highland Girl. I cannot help feeling that " The Affliction of Margaret —— " belongs, in part at least, to a much earlier time. From the eighth, ninth, and tenth stanzas we receive an impression of geographical space, a glimpse of supernatural possibilities, and a dread of man's inhumanity, which are characteristic of much of the poetry he composed at Alfoxden.*

The poem beginning " There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine," was ascribed to 1804. It is chiefly remarkable for the poignant pathos of the two lines:

> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old.

On May 8, 1804, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson:† " Poor Coleridge has sailed in the Speedwell."

And again, on July 18, to the same correspondent, she ran on from an animated description of her little nephew to some anxious words about their distant friend. After several ecstatic pages in regard to baby John, she says:

" But, God bless him! he has one grievous fault: he is terribly passionate. . . . The dear Lamb! I call him so, in spite of his impatience, for no Lamb was ever gentler and sweeter or more loving. He hangs about us and hugs us round our necks, and at night, when I go to bed with him, he laughs for joy and puts his sweet

* After making this conjecture, I was delighted to find that the most acute and accurate of Wordsworth scholars, Mr. T. Hutchinson, says in his edition of the Poems of 1807, Vol. I., p. 173, that " a MS. copy exists, headed 'Affliction of Mary —— of ——; written for the Lyrical Ballads.'" A rejected prologue, of six heroic couplets, was printed by W. Hale White in his " Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman," p. 63.

† This and the following letter are from the original manuscript in the British Museum.

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little arm round my neck. We have all at this moment (I was called from my writing to see him) been witnessing him climb up the orchard steps. You know what a difficult road it is. Young ladies who are not used to it hobble up and down, though in full health and strength. He went all the way from the new door to the very top of the steps entirely without help, with the utmost caution, yet no cowardice, and never made a false step. You may be sure we followed his heels up the steps. . . . We have had no more news of Coleridge. We now begin to be anxious about him. We are also somewhat anxious about my Brother John, lest he should fall into the hands of the French. . . . William is very well. He begs to be most tenderly remembered to you. He has given himself up to leisure ever since he went to Park House, but he is now going to begin with his poem, and I hope will go on as before. God grant that you may be here next summer. We shall then have the happiness of reading it with you."

The poet's daughter Dorothy—generally known as Dora—was born August 16, 1804. Otherwise, what we may term Wordsworth's personal history, apart from his literary pursuits, was uneventful that year. We catch a few glimpses of home life in Dorothy's unpublished letters to Mrs. Clarkson. The baby Dorothy " is her father's darling, his little pet, and yet he seems as fond of John as it is possible to be." William has had a long interruption from summer company, Mary's confinement, etc., but goes on with his work again. " William and I," she writes on October 14, 1804, " have been on a tour to Ennerdale and Wasdale since Sara left us, and at our return we found Mr. Montagu and George Dyer. Busy, however, as we have been kept with company, we had no sorrow about their coming—nothing but pleasure. Mrs. Lovel, too, has been with us. [Mrs. Coleridge's sister. Mrs. Coleridge and her children had been at Town-end, too, not long before.] She came unexpectedly, and her we were very glad to see. She is an interesting woman, though of a fretful, unhappy temper." Christopher Wordsworth has lately been married to Priscilla, sister of Charles Lloyd. John Wordsworth, through the interest of Mr. Wilberforce,

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has just got what he calls " a better voyage "—that is, he does not go to China direct as before. In a letter of January 6, 1805, from Park House, near Ullswater, where Tom and Sara Hutchinson are trying to begin farming again after losing their old farm in Yorkshire, she writes: " It is near seven o'clock, Sunday night. We have just put our two children to bed, and William, Mary, Sara, Joanna, Tom, and George Hutchinson, with Hartley Coleridge, are making a Christmas party round the fire." In a letter of February 10, 1805, she says: " We have built a delightful shed at the top of the orchard [at Town-end]. It is a warm shelter in winter when the frost is not keen. . . . We have no letters from Coleridge, which makes us very anxious about him."

Letters from Coleridge were rare, and finally ceased altogether. To miss his comments on " The Prelude " in the course of composition must have been a grievous loss. Almost all Wordsworth's energy was being directed towards the completion of that work. He reached his goal in the summer of 1805. Most of the short poems composed that year have some relation to the great domestic bereavement which darkened it. This is the more apparent if we remark that the joyous lines " To a Skylark," " Up with me ! up with me into the clouds !" which their author afterwards ascribed to 1805, were probably written in 1801; and that " The Waggoner," its author's longest and most successful attempt at what may, broadly, be called " humour," was perhaps written a year later than has been supposed. Of the remaining poems, the " Ode to Duty " may well have sprung from a mind tempered by reflection upon the faithful life and heroic death of John Wordsworth, and three others were written to his memory. The lines " When to the Attractions of the Busy World " were probably composed shortly after John's long sojourn at Dove Cottage, from January, 1800, to September 29 of that year.

This beloved brother never came back to Grasmere after the farewell near Grisedale Tarn on that autumn day. His affairs prospered, and he was made captain

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of his ship, the *Abergavenny*, East Indiaman. On January 24, 1805, he wrote to William from Portsmouth, whence he expected to sail the next day if the wind continued fair.* There were four hundred souls on board, half of them soldiers and paying passengers. Captain Wordsworth had invested all his own property in the cargo, and much borrowed money besides, including £1,200 belonging to Dorothy and William, one-third of what they had inherited from their father. Almost the last words of the captain's last letter are about his brother's poems. He was himself of a poetic nature, and his life was itself a true poem. Though less than a year younger than his sister, the simplicity and modesty of his character made him seem like a boy. He loved nature and solitude, and, whether on sea or land, kept in communion with the winds and stars. He loved poetry, too, and carried his brother's verses to sea with him. His life of danger and excitement was like a romance to the quiet inmates of Dove Cottage, and Dorothy spoke of him as their one hope.

The *Abergavenny* was lost on the night of February 5, 1805, off Weymouth, and her brave captain, calm to the last, perished with her. Neither William nor Dorothy ever recovered from this blow. They were henceforth no longer capable of a certain joyousness which used to carry them at times outside of themselves. It is a fatal property of imagination in serious and reflective persons that it makes its possessors suffer every ill in anticipation. No doubt the lonely watchers at Dove Cottage had lived through many a night of imaginary shipwreck. Still, reality is never quite the same as a dream, and the shock of John's death, with the exchange of sympathy which followed, roused William to a salutary quickening of contact with his fellow-men. This he has acknowledged in his "Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont." If it had been *his* power to paint, he says, he would once have made a picture of "lasting ease, Elysian quiet without toil or strife."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 177.

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So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my soul.

* * * * * *

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

This is one of the best examples of Wordsworth's "healing power." Less explicit, but yet very close, is the relation between his personal loss and the "Ode to Duty." When death looks even a healthy and innocent child in the face, joy withers. Yet joy, the poet held, was the fountain-head of poetry. He had been saying this to himself as he composed the "Intimations" ode. It was the lesson he thought he had learned from his own experience, and of this lesson "The Prelude" was an elaborate utterance. What then? When joy departs, does life lose all savour? Does its grandeur, or even its interest, fade? Does it become unfit for poetic interpretation? To these questions the "Ode to Duty" is a confident reply. The whole poem corresponds morally to the tenth and eleventh stanzas of the "Intimations" ode, where the same fresh start is made, on an impulse springing from a deeper principle than joy. In the "Intimations" the poet does not get beyond

"the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering,"

unless, indeed, something more is implied in "faith that looks through death." But in the "Ode to Duty" acknowledgment is at last made by this proud man that obedience is a more important law of the universe than joy.

At first he was numb with grief, and his work was suspended. What brought back strength and courage

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was an effort to write about his brother. As late as May 1 he told Beaumont:*

"Time was stealing away fast from me, and nothing done, and my mind still seeming unfit to do anything. At first I had a strong impulse to write a poem that should record my brother's virtues, and be worthy of his memory. I began to give vent to my feelings, with this view; but I was overpowered by my subject, and could not proceed. I composed much, but it is all lost except a few lines, as it came from me in such a torrent that I was unable to remember it. I could not hold the pen myself, and the subject was such that I could not employ Mrs. Wordsworth or my sister as my amanuensis. This work must therefore rest awhile till I am something calmer. I shall, however, never be at peace till, as far as in me lies, I have done justice to my departed brother's memory. His heroic death (the particulars of which I have now accurately collected from several of the survivors) exacts this from me, and still more his singularly interesting character and virtuous and innocent life."

It may be that both the "Ode to Duty" and the "Character of the Happy Warrior" resulted from this attempt. In the same letter Wordsworth states that, being unable to proceed with it, he resumed work on the poem on his own life, and had nearly completed it. Not self-conceit, he protests, but humility, prompted him, for he was diffident of his own powers, and wished to test them in a plain description of what he had felt and seen. He admitted that he had been prolix, but this defect he had always, he said, found to be incurable whenever it occurred in any of his writings. He hoped Beaumont would say nothing to Coleridge about this redundancy, for he desired to have the latter's unbiassed opinion. At last, on June 3, 1805, he was able to announce to Sir George that he had finished the poem about a fortnight before.† "I had," he says, "looked forward to the day as a most happy one; and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work, such as it is." But the day was not happy. He

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 185. † *Ibid.*, 190.

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was not satisfied with the poem, the only long labour he had ever finished. He doubted whether he should live to complete "The Recluse," to which the present poem was to serve as a mere portico. But he intended to begin it soon, and when that was done, and a narrative poem of the epic kind, he should consider the task of his life as over. The chief cause of his depression, he stated, was the thought that he could not show the manuscript to his departed brother.

The whole force of Wordsworth's character lies behind all his letters except a few casual notes. They are marked by gravity, fulness of front, and a direct reference to first principles. Yet, while manly and frank, they are rarely unreserved. He opened his heart in his poems, and no doubt in his conversation with three or four persons, but seldom in those letters, at least, which have been preserved. We must remember that his correspondence with his sister and with Coleridge has been almost completely lost. There are, however, three of his letters to Beaumont and one to Southey on the subject of his brother John, in which he lays bare his feelings,* and they take their place in this respect with the most intimate of his poems. In the very fire of his affliction, on the day when the news arrived, his thought turned at once to his sister and his friend: "I can say nothing higher of my ever-dear brother than that he was worthy of his sister who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge—meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet in everything but words. . . . We have had no tidings of Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart,—and his poor body cannot bear sorrow."

John was one of the remarkably large band who perceived the potency for good in the poet before he had yet proved his powers, and who dedicated to him their property or their services: Dorothy, Coleridge, Mrs. Wordsworth, Sara Hutchinson, Raisley Calvert, Sir George Beaumont. "As you will have seen," another

* "Memoirs," I. 287-301.

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of these letters says, " we had little to live upon and he as little (Lord Lonsdale being then alive). But he encouraged me to persist, and to keep my eye steady on its object. He would work for me (that was his language)—for me and his sister; and I was to endeavour to do something for the world." Two former ventures had failed; he had lost by them; the third was to have made them all secure. The obligation to do something for the world remained. " I shall never forget him, never lose sight of him. There is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living,—nay far more sacred, —calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost, to live in honour and worthiness."

I judge that Wordsworth had steeled his heart not to lean too heavily upon the hope of immortality. His writings, both public and private, up to this time, are noticeably free from the language of theology. They would not suffice to show that their author held the Christian faith, and, indeed, their reticence might well support the contention that he was still an unbeliever. He rarely uses the name of God, and in the following extract, which contains the first hint of a return to faith, it is to be observed that he employs appellations to which the usage of the eighteenth century had given a deistical rather than an orthodox tinge—" the supreme Governor," " the great Cause and Ruler of things." The reflections are such as the intense realization of what we call " evil " or " pain " or " death " raises in every breast.

" A thousand times have I asked myself," he writes to Beaumont, " ' why was he taken away ?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents ? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme Governor ? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be His notion and rule, if

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everything were to end here? Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being destroyed by death, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have more of love in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of another and a better world, I do not see."

Commonplaces? Yes, no doubt. But not with him. It makes all the difference who utters a commonplace. Wordsworth's inner life is a drama, whose value to the world is due to his perfect integrity and sincerity. Those reflections, from the pen of Southey, would carry little weight. Even from Coleridge they might seem too purely intellectual, or founded upon emotions too far developed from their source in instinct. The simplest and the most philosophic minds have ever formulated precisely these and no more convincing arguments for a future conscious life. They are indeed commonplaces. And it is of the utmost importance to know that Wordsworth, of all men, was forced to fall back upon them. In his letter to Southey, who was always urging his own brother, a naval officer, to perform some military exploit, such as capturing a prize, and whose language on the subject was often boyishly callous, Wordsworth sent a timely monition, and the passage proves that, in this time of sober vision, he saw for what it is worth the glory of this world and the glitter of arms:

"Oh! it makes the heart groan that, with such a beautiful world as this to live in, and such a soul as that of man's is by nature and gift of God, we should go about on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste; and ninety-nine of us in a hundred never easy in any road that travels towards peace and quietness. And yet, what virtue and what goodness, what heroism and courage, what triumphs of disinterested love everywhere, and human life, after all, what it is! Surely, this is not to be for ever, even on this perishable planet!"

Throughout that sad spring, *ver tenebrosum* for the Wordsworths, Charles Lamb busied himself collecting information about the wreck, which disproved the news-

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paper insinuation that Captain Wordsworth had not tried to save his own life even when there was nothing else to save; and Mary Lamb and the good Mrs. Clarkson wrote letters of consolation to Dorothy. One voice was absent and greatly missed—that of Coleridge. As Mary Lamb wrote, in her touchingly simple poem:

> Why is he wandering on the sea ?
> Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.

He had, as we have seen, left England on April 9, 1804, and for some time news of him trickled home through the letters of Dr. Stoddart and his sister, who were friends of the Lambs. But for more than two years and four months he almost entirely failed to communicate with Mrs. Coleridge, Southey, Poole, the Wedgwoods, and the Wordsworths. War was in progress, the mail service was disorganized, and it is of course possible that his letters were intercepted. What is more certain, however, is that his indulgence in opiates, now that he was no longer protected by the tender watchfulness of those who loved him, increased fearfully and made him desperate. He is known to have left Malta September 21, 1805, and probably lived at Naples till the following January, when he went to Rome. Here he stayed till May 18. After that his movements are not definitely known until the date of his arrival off Portsmouth, August 11, 1806.* He was very ill at the time of his return, and on one pretext and another postponed going north until about November 1. In the meanwhile his failure to write or make definite plans, and the alarming accounts of his health, kept his friends on the rack. The Wordsworths had been expecting him daily for eighteen months. The suspense became agonizing when the death of their brother caused them to yearn for sympathy and the drawing together of old ties. "Coleridge's return . . . which surely will not be long," writes Dorothy in January, 1805, to Mrs. Clarkson. And in April she writes to her again: "We look forward to Coleridge's return with fear and painful hope, but indeed

* J. Dykes Campbell, "Life of S. T. Coleridge," Chap. VIII.

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I dare not look to it. I think as little as I can of him. Oh, my dear friend, my heart seems to be shut against worldly hope!"*

On Saturday, December 11, 1805, she writes to Mrs. Clarkson:† "I have for many days been intending to send you a copy of a Poem which William has written for the Journal, suggested by that beautiful passage in Thomas Wilkinson's Tour about the solitary Highland Lass singing at her harvest work." She transcribes the poem, and relates what might have been a very serious mishap. The Third Part of her Journal of the Tour, and five books of William's poem, which had been sent to Mary, who was staying at Park House, were lost by the carrier. They had kept one copy, and Mary was to make a third. Fortunately, the parcel was found later in a field where a thief had left it. The third copy was intended as a gift for Coleridge on his return. It still exists, in a beautiful handwriting—Sara Hutchinson's, probably. They were all much cheered by a letter from Mary Lamb, stating that her brother had heard from Stoddart, at Malta, that Coleridge had reached Trieste on his way home. Dorothy, however, is apprehensive lest the French may capture him. William thinks he will most likely "wheel round and pass through some parts of Hungary and Prussia. It will be a terribly long journey in this cold season, and it is impossible not to have fears for his health, but it is astonishing what he can bear when his mind is at work with his body." Nevertheless, she is extremely anxious. The lost manuscript was found in a corner of a field near Kirkstone Pass, where it had been thrown away as worthless by someone who had picked it up in the road.

In October Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "I am sorry to say I am not yet settled to any serious employment. The expectation of Coleridge not a little unhinges me." He betakes himself in this unsettled state to translating Ariosto and Michael Angelo's sonnets.‡

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 176, 184.
† From the original manuscript in the British Museum.
‡ "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 206.

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His comment on the sonnets is so finely expressed, in a letter to Beaumont, that I cannot forbear quoting it here:

"I mentioned Michael Angelo's poetry some time ago; it is the most difficult to construe I ever met with, but just what you would expect from such a man, showing abundantly how conversant his soul was with great things. There is a mistake in the world concerning the Italian language; the poetry of Dante and Michael Angelo proves that, if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the authors, and not in the tongue. I can translate, and have translated, two books of Ariosto at the rate, nearly, of 100 lines a day; but so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable. I attempted, at least, fifteen of the sonnets, but could not anywhere succeed. I have sent you the only one I was able to finish; it is far from being the best or most characteristic, but the others were too much for me."*

The only text of Michael Angelo then available was the dressed-up text published by his great-nephew, Michael Angelo the younger, in 1623. It was not till 1863 that the poems were faithfully edited by Cesare Guasti. Wordsworth would have found the true originals even more difficult to translate than the text he used.

As late as February, 1806, they were still uncertain whether Coleridge was well or ill, alive or dead. On the 11th of that month Wordsworth writes to Beaumont:† "We have lately had much anxiety about Coleridge. What can have become of him? It must be upwards of three months since he landed at Trieste. Has he returned to Malta, think you, or what can have befallen him? He has never since been heard of." It is the same story in letter after letter. We need him to ease the heartache; we need him to kindle our minds; we need him in Grasmere, and is he in Trieste? Travels Waring east away?

On August 1, 1806, Wordsworth writes to Beaumont:‡

* "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 116. † *Ibid.*, I. 126.

‡ "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 100, and "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 195. Knight gives the date incorrectly as 1805.

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" I do not know whether my sister has written since we had another account of Coleridge,—I am sorry I cannot say *from* him. He was at Leghorn, with a friend, on their way to England; so that we will still continue to look for him daily." He goes on to say that Coleridge has lost all his papers, including the poems copied for him by Mrs. Wordsworth and Dorothy and five books of " The Prelude." He longs for a conversation with him on the subject of " The Recluse," which is now being rapidly composed.

I have made merely a selection from the references to Coleridge in the correspondence of 1804-1806. Even these few show how the man was loved, and that his friends depended on him as much as he, the most dependent of men, upon them. If the letters that passed directly between him and them had been preserved, what tale of ancient or modern love would surpass this romance of friendship? Even these little outcries of anxiety and pain show the intensity of Wordsworth's affections. It is easy now to understand why he aged so rapidly during Coleridge's absence. He looked old before his time. All his portraits, after the Alfoxden period, make him appear much older than he was when they were taken. He knew and feared his extreme sensibility, but the more austerely he denied it outward expression, the more it wasted him inwardly.

When news of the wanderer's return reached the Lambs in August, it spread like the word of Drake's home-coming in the *Golden Hind*. And then came his strange conduct in delaying to go north, and reports of his changed looks and miserable spirits. Again and again he broke his engagements. Finally, what the Wordsworths had long known became apparent to the whole friendly circle: he could no longer endure the thought of living with his wife. Wordsworth, whose family had grown too large for Dove Cottage, was ready to go anywhere so as to be near him. Plans of this kind were made and unmade all through the autumn. Owing to Sir George's generous proposals, it was neces-

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sary to explain matters to him, and at last Wordsworth and his sister broke their long silence.

"What shall I say of Coleridge? or what can I say?" Wordsworth writes to Beaumont.* "My dear friend, this is certain, that he is destined to be unhappy. I would not distress you and Lady Beaumont with this, but it is not to be kept from you, and ought not, loving him and us as you do. I believe I have spoken to Lady Beaumont of his domestic situation, so that the little which I shall now say will not be altogether new, and therefore will, I hope, be less felt. In fact, he dare not go home, he recoils so much from the thought of domesticating with Mrs. Coleridge, with whom, though on many accounts he much respects her, he is so miserable that he dare not encounter it. What a deplorable thing! I have written to him to say that if he does not come down immediately I must insist upon seeing him somewhere. If he appoints London, I shall go. I believe, if anything good is to be done for him, it must be done by me."

Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont some time in the autumn as follows:† "My dear Friend, you will judge how much we have suffered from anxiety and distress within the last few weeks. We have long known how unfit Coleridge and his wife were for each other. . . . Poor soul! he had a struggle of many years striving to bring Mrs. Coleridge to a change of temper, and something like communion with him in his enjoyments. . . . I hope everything from the effect of my brother's conversation upon Coleridge's mind."

Her brother, however, was prevented from going to London by the fact that, when Coleridge at last brought himself to write, it was to say that he was coming north. But as the Wordsworths had undertaken to remove from Dove Cottage to Coleorton, and it was found that Coleridge had promised to give a course of lectures in London, they were in a quandary. When they had reached Kendal, on their way to Coleorton, which is in Leicestershire, they learned that Coleridge was at Pen-

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 243, and "Memorials of Coleorton."

† "Memorials of Coleorton," and "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 247.

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rith, hovering about Keswick, but not venturing to go there; so they waited in Kendal at great inconvenience, sending off a special messenger to request him to join them there. Sara Hutchinson was in communication with him, and in some way they managed to drive and entice him to Kendal. From Dorothy Wordsworth's letter of November 6 to Mrs. Clarkson,* describing the painful scenes which ensued, I infer that he was in a kind of delirium. He arrived at an inn about seven in the evening, and sent for Wordsworth. We must remember that the friends had not met for over two years and eight months. Dorothy says:

"We all [*i.e.*, W. W., D. W., M. H., and S. H.] went thither to him, and never, never did I feel such a shock as at first sight of him. We all felt exactly in the same way—as if he were different from what we had expected to see; almost as much as a person of whom we had thought much, and of whom we had formed an image in our own minds, without having any personal knowledge of him. . . . We—that is, Mary and I—stayed with him from Sunday evening till Tuesday morning at nine o'clock; but Sara Hutchinson and William did not part from him till the morning following. Alas! what can I say? I know not what to hope for, or what to expect. My wishes are plain and fair, that he may have strength of mind to abide by his resolution of separating from Mrs. C., and hereafter may continue unshaken."

He appeared to her utterly changed. He would not talk about himself or them or their common friends. "The divine expression of his countenance," to use her own phrase, was lost. "Alas! I never saw it, as it used to be—a shadow, a gleam there was at times, but how faint and transitory." She was sure he was ill, and that he must sink if he did not grow more happy. "I think, however," she adds, "that, if he have courage to go through the work before him, William's conversation and our kind offices may soothe him and bring on tranquillity; and then the only hope that remains will be in his applying himself to some grand object connected with permanent effects." These last ten words

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 249-252.

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were doubtless caught from her brother's lips. How like him they sound! and how well he knew the character of his friend! For, be it observed, not even at this trying crisis did those who truly understood Coleridge think of him as a man of petty or selfish aims. With all his failings, they honoured him as a man, or more than man, dedicated to high and impersonal objects. I have seen nothing to indicate that Dorothy *knew* he was addicted to the opium habit, though it is hard to believe she could have remained ignorant. Naturally, the domestic difficulty seemed to her sufficient to account for everything. In a letter to Lady Beaumont, post-marked December 10, 1806,* she says they have had four letters from Coleridge, and "in all he speaks with the same steadiness of his resolution to separate from Mrs. Coleridge, and she has fully agreed to it, and consented that he should take Hartley and Derwent and superintend their education, she being allowed to have them at the holidays." But poor Mrs. Coleridge kept changing her mind.

Coleridge attributed her reluctance to a "mere selfish desire to have a *rank* in life, and not to be believed to be that which she really was," and to a fear of what people would say.† It is impossible not to sympathize with the neglected wife, though the judgment of the fair-minded Dorothy Wordsworth is plainly against her. The separation was not publicly or officially made, but on December 21 Coleridge, with his eldest boy, joined the Wordsworths at Coleorton, and he remained with them about two months. He had made shipwreck of his life, but managed to steer into a friendly haven, with much precious cargo, and refit. It was at Coleorton, in January, 1807, that Wordsworth read to him the poem on his own life; and here, too, lifted from despair by this noble tribute to himself, and with a heart renewed by this appeal to his better nature, Coleridge wrote his pathetic response, "To William Wordsworth, composed

* "Memorials of Coleorton," and "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 263.

† Quoted by Dorothy in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 267.

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for the greater part on the same night after the finishing of his recitation of the Poem in Thirteen Books, on the Growth of his own Mind."

To account for Wordsworth's being at Coleorton, we shall have to go back about two years, and consider the course of his friendship with Sir George and Lady Beaumont. His letters to them are generally very long, and not always of much biographical interest. He seems to have mastered fairly well, in the case of the Beaumonts, that nervousness which afflicted him when writing to Poole or Lamb or De Quincey. Sir George was a man of diversified culture, interested not only in painting, but in all the fine arts. He was a kinsman of the Elizabethan dramatist Francis Beaumont, and possessed a refined yet liberal taste for poetry. He was not only hospitable and free-handed to Wordsworth, but the first person of high rank and large social influence to appreciate his works. He was about seventeen years older than Wordsworth, which helps to account for the tone of deference that marks the latter's epistles to him. Epistles they truly are, of a kind that had already gone out of fashion. Three subjects in particular are treated in them, again and again—architecture, landscape-gardening, and the philosophy of all the arts.

Sir George was building on a large scale at Coleorton, and sought Wordsworth's advice as a professional student of the relation between natural beauty and the works of man. Starting from a principle formulated by Coleridge, though probably conceived by himself, Wordsworth insisted that it should not be attempted, as in the case of many large estates, to make the surrounding country conform to the style of a mansion, but that the house should harmonize with the country. "Indeed," said this wise counsellor, in words which modern building has fully justified, "in the present state of society, I see nothing interesting either to the imagination or the heart, and, of course, nothing which true taste can approve, in any interference with Nature, grounded upon any other principle."* Would that all

* "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 104.

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builders, in the century of ostentatious extravagance which has intervened between that day and ours, had obeyed this canon of taste! With Wordsworth the building of a house was a sacred rite, and I have heard the late occupant of Lancrigg, Henry J. Roby, repeat the well-authenticated legend that Wordsworth, with strenuous attention, oversaw the construction of new chimneys there when the property belonged to Mrs. Fletcher. Such things were to him illustrations of a sublime theory, based on reverence for nature, on close observance of her laws, and on a due regard for man's place in the universe. "If I were disposed," he says, in the letter just quoted, "to write a sermon upon the subject of taste in natural beauty . . . all that I had to say would begin and end in the human heart, as under the direction of the Divine Nature, conferring value on the objects of the senses and pointing out what is valuable in them." This remark borne constantly in mind while reading his poetry will help us to understand many a passage whose significance might otherwise escape us. "No liberal art," he says in another letter,* "aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class: the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so; the true servant of the Arts pays homage to the human kind as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds."

In October, 1806, Sir George lent Wordsworth a farmhouse on his Coleorton estate, and there the family, with Sara Hutchinson, and for awhile with Coleridge and his son Hartley, lived until the following August.† In the absence of the proprietor, Wordsworth supervised the laying out of the grounds. He had studied the life of trees. He knew the manner of their growth, and could foresee how a plantation would look after many years. To the groves and lawns, the hedges and fences,

* "Memorials of Coleorton," I. 113.

† In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, dated July 19 and postmarked Penrith, and now preserved in the British Museum, Dorothy says: "We left Coleorton on Monday, the 10th of June"; and on the homeward journey "we stayed a fortnight at Halifax." I think, however, she does not mean that the whole family went north at that time.

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the cottages and outbuildings, of Coleorton, he gave many weeks of careful and methodical planning. I should suppose that every landscape-gardener would profit by reading his letters to the Beaumonts, which are full of professional detail. It is true that in them the dogmatic tone which rings through all his later prose begins to appear prominently, but he is discoursing on a subject of which he has gained mastery. People who met him casually in later life, or heard him talk once or twice, pronounced him opinionated. This was never the judgment of those who knew him well, for they realized that what he said was part of a reasoned system.

During the years 1805-1807, while Coleridge was absent, the Clarksons were good neighbours and constant correspondents, and intercourse was maintained with Charles and Mary Lamb. Poole, for a time, seems to have been neglected, not only by Coleridge, from whom he received no word for three years,* but by Wordsworth. Southey never had been an intimate friend, and the fact that he was now living at Keswick did not bring him much closer. Wordsworth found him insipid. In July, 1804, the Wordsworths had a day and a half of Humphry Davy's company,† as he passed through Grasmere on his way to Edinburgh. He was at Grasmere again in the autumn of 1805, together with Walter Scott and Mrs. Scott. The following passage from Lockhart's " Life of Scott "‡ records the occasion:

" About this time Mr. and Mrs. Scott made a short excursion to the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr. Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the banks of Grasmere; and at least one of the days they spent together was destined to furnish a theme for the verse of each, namely, that which they

* " Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 175.
† " Memorials of Coleorton," I. 66.
‡ Vol. II., p. 274: Edinburgh, 1851.

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gave to the ascent of Helvellyn, where, in the course of the preceding spring, a young gentleman having lost his way and perished by falling over a precipice, his remains were discovered, three months afterwards, still watched by 'a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent rambles among the wilds.' This day they were accompanied by an illustrious philosopher, who was also a true poet—and might have been one of the greatest of poets had he chosen; and I have heard Mr. Wordsworth say that it would be difficult to express the feelings with which he, who so often had climbed Helvellyn alone, found himself standing on its summit with two such men as Scott and Davy."

Wordsworth's poem is called "Fidelity," and Scott's "Helvellyn." In "Musings near Aquapendente," written in 1837, Wordsworth recalled that hour on

> old Helvellyn's brow,
> Where once together, in his day of strength,
> We stood rejoicing, as if earth were free
> From sorrow, like the sky above our heads,

and his memory of the occasion was so vivid that he could tell Miss Fenwick in 1843:

"Sir Humphry Davy was with us at the time. We had ascended from Patterdale, and I could not but admire the vigour with which Scott scrambled along that horn of the mountain called Striding Edge. Our progress was necessarily slow, and was beguiled by Scott's telling many stories and amusing anecdotes, as was his custom. Sir H. Davy would have probably been better pleased if other topics had occasionally been interspersed, and some discussion entered upon. At all events, he did not remain with us long at the top of the mountain, but left us to find our way down its steep side together into the Vale of Grasmere, where, at my cottage, Mrs. Scott was to meet us at dinner."

Not long afterwards, on November 7, 1805, Wordsworth on foot, and his sister riding a pony, with a wallet containing their bundle of "needments," climbed over Kirkstone Pass to Patterdale, and wandered for a week along the shores of Ullswater. Her account of this outing has been printed in her Journal. It served as the basis for Wordsworth's sketch, "Excursion on the

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Banks of Ullswater," which he published in his "Guide through the District of the Lakes" in 1835. A comparison of the two records helps one to understand the intellectual relationship of the brother and sister. As it was raining when they reached Patterdale, Wordsworth employed his surplus energy—most men after such a walk would have had none to spare—in writing to Scott. The latter was then preparing his edition of Dryden, and had asked for advice. Wordsworth expresses his satisfaction with Scott's undertaking, and gives in one page of inestimable value his opinion of Dryden's genius. I do not know anywhere in our language an equally brief piece of criticism which is so complete and so just. It is as follows:*

"I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden: not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine; I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or, rather, that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden: but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men, or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage."

* Lockhart, "Life of Scott," II. 287.

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While they were still wandering amid scenes of peace and happiness, news reached them, on November 10 of the death of Lord Nelson and of the victory at Trafalgar. "Sequestered as we were," writes Wordsworth, "from the sympathy of a crowd, we were shocked to hear that the bells had been ringing joyously at Penrith to celebrate the triumph."

It was while upon this excursion that Wordsworth opened negotiations for the purchase of a property on the shores of Ullswater. Dove Cottage was overcrowded, and he had found a beautiful spot near Patterdale, well suited to his needs. He thought it worth £700, and offered £800, which was refused. Hearing of this, his Quaker friend Wilkinson mentioned the matter to Lord Lowther, who, without consulting Wordsworth, whom he had never met, bought the property for £1,000, and presented it to the poet. Wordsworth, embarrassed by this generosity, insisted on returning to Lord Lowther that part of this sum which he had been prepared to pay in the first place, and accepted only the remaining £200. But his project of enlarging the small cottage he had thus obtained, and removing to it, never came to a head, owing principally to Sir George Beaumont's invitation to Coleorton and his own desire to accommodate his plans to those of Coleridge.*

There occurred in 1806 a short renewal of intercourse with the Rev. Francis Wrangham, now very wealthy and eminent in the fashionable and the literary worlds. This old friend seems to have suggested that they should publish the satirical verse upon which they had co-operated ten years before. We have Wordsworth's reply.† He says he has determined to steer clear of personal satire. He would be slow to meddle even with public offenders. He declines, therefore, to lend any assistance to the proposed publication, and asks to have his old satirical verses destroyed. He is afraid that if they were published without his name the authorship would leak out, and he does not wish that to happen.

* "Memoirs," I. 319. † "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 252.

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William Hazlitt renewed his acquaintance, as we learn in a letter from Southey to Richard Duppa, dated December 14, 1803,* in which he says: "Hazlitt, whom you saw at Paris, has been here; a man of real genius. He has made a very fine picture of Coleridge for Sir George Beaumont, which is said to be in Titian's manner; he has also painted Wordsworth, but so dismally, though Wordsworth's face is his idea of physiognomical perfection, that one of his friends, on seeing it, exclaimed, 'At the gallows—deeply affected by his deserved fate—yet determined to die like a man'; and if you saw the picture you would admire the criticism."

Southey cannot be accused of excessive reverence for his great contemporaries. He judged them with jaunty self-assurance, habitually assuming that some quality or other of his own set him in a superior position. The overwhelming respectability of his character, his prudence, learning, industry, and kindness, were insufficient to draw Wordsworth to him; hence there is very little record of intimacy between them in the years we are considering. He had, with reference to ideas, movements, and general principles, a fatal inability to see things as they really were, uncoloured by the sentiments which, for the time being, predominated in his own mind. He was therefore an uncommonly bad prophet, though he was for ever prophesying. It is to his credit as a critic, however, that so early as 1804 he made the following prediction about Wordsworth, if he really meant half of what he said:† "Wordsworth will do better [than Coleridge], and leave behind him a name, unique in its way; he will rank among the very first poets, and probably possesses a mass of merits superior to all, except only Shakespeare. This is doing much, yet he would be a happier man if he did more."

The following letter, of which hitherto only a few words have been printed, from Dorothy to Mrs. Marshall, accounts for the doings of the Wordsworth family in the spring of 1806:

* "Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey," II. 237.

† *Ibid.*, 278.

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"GRASMERE,
"*Monday, June 2nd.*

"Sara Hutchinson is with us. . . . My brother has been in London for two months; he returned on Monday week in great spirits and much improved in his health, and very glad to be in quiet at home again, though he enjoyed himself highly in the gay world, being resolved to see all that it was possible in the time. I wish he had come home by Leeds [where Mrs. Marshall lived] instead of Manchester. [He came to be in time for Mrs. Wordsworth's third confinement.] . . . He brought us very pleasing accounts of my uncle Cookson's family, all of whom he saw but one, and of my brother Christopher and his wife and child. They live very nicely in a nice house at Lambeth.* As for us, we shall at last be driven out of our cottage, for we do not think we ought to live here another winter, and with a third child it is so very unwholesome for a large family, the rooms being so small and low."

Dorothy (known as Dora) was born August 16, 1804, and Thomas June 16, 1806.

* Christopher Wordsworth was Rector of Lambeth. He was soon to become Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, in which office he seemed "pompous and priggish" to Edward Fitzgerald in his undergraduate days (see Fitzgerald's "Letters," p. 381). He was a voluminous writer of theological books, and an important personage in the ecclesiastical world.

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CHAPTER XXII

NEW SONG

LET us reserve five great poems completed between 1803 and 1807—the ode on "Intimations of Immortality," the "Ode to Duty," the "Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," and the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle"—and consider now the others written in that period. They number about fifty, and, although in many cases the date of their composition is not known, they were nearly all published in the two volumes of 1807. Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, in the preface to his reprint of this edition, worthily testifies to "the superiority of the 'Poems in Two Volumes' to all other original issues of Wordsworth's verse." This high quality shows itself in almost every piece in that collection, and, furthermore, we have here a range of thought and a variety of craftsmanship unequalled in a single publication by any other poet, not excepting "Les Contemplations" of Victor Hugo. Had these volumes been printed anonymously, critics might well have been excused for regarding them as the work of several authors. In "The Horn of Egremont Castle" we have a tale of chivalry such as Scott might have attempted in one of his literary raids across the border. In "Stray Pleasures," "The Power of Music," and "Star-gazers," we have three light, colloquial pieces, loose of structure, in experimental verse forms, yet each leading to a moral, "not of this noisy world, but silent and divine." Mr. Hutchinson says, "they doubtless belong to Wordsworth's visit to London in the Spring of 1806;"* and so in a sense they do, but I have a feeling

* It may have been at this time that the meeting with Charles James Fox mentioned on p. 113 occurred.

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that the memories upon which they were founded reached back to an earlier time, 1791 or 1793, when the poet, as he tells us in "The Prelude," was making it his serious business to catch at incidents of street life that might serve to connect its turbulence and change with what is permanent in nature. It is interesting to observe that in almost all the passages or whole poems in which Wordsworth describes the town he indulges in a free, rapid, and comparatively careless manner, in marked contrast to the compact and scrupulous style of his descriptions of natural objects.

Of the latter and more characteristic kind we have many examples among the poems written between his tour in Scotland and the spring of 1807—examples of nature's power to soothe, to satisfy, to elevate, the heart. They are of a less agitated strain than the "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," less abounding in obstinate questionings, less audacious in the claims they make for the human spirit. We find in them, not the wild joy of communion with elemental force, but a restful willingness to accept what nature may deign to bestow. The madness and gladness of discovery have given way to steady happiness founded on a humble and well-tested faith. Perhaps the best instance of what I mean is the little poem "Yes, it was the mountain Echo," with its admonition to listen, ponder, and hold dear, the voices that come we know not whence. The perfect sonnet "To Sleep"—"A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by"—shows the conquest he has achieved over his unquiet soul, and how nature no longer haunts him like a passion, but has become a "Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health." We think sadly of poor Coleridge and his awful lines on "The Pains of Sleep." The thought forces itself upon us, too, that Wordsworth's gains as a man were imperilling his genius as a poet. There is a more authentic *aura* of inspiration, a diviner, even if a thinner air, in "Tintern Abbey," "Resolution and Independence," "At the Grave of Burns," in Shelley's "Alastor" and "Ode to the West Wind," in Coleridge's

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" Dejection," in Leopardi's " La Ginestra," in " Les Nuits " of Musset, than in any song of " homefelt delight " and " sober certainty of waking bliss." It is one of Wordsworth's royal distinctions that, like Shakespeare and Goethe, the poet in him survived the attainment of happiness; that he, like them, passed from melodious agony to serene harmonies. But that the gain for art, for philosophy, for personal completeness, is won at the expense of poetry, in the purest and most absolute sense of the word, there can be no question.

Joy, Wordsworth once thought, is the motive and background of poetry. But joy is an intense, mysterious, elemental passion, and its closest fellow is not tranquillity, but pain. And pain inspired the most poignant note in these short poems printed for the first time in 1807, the lines entitled " A Complaint," and beginning " There is a change—and I am poor."

Acting on the theory that personal references tended to diminish the permanent value of poetry, Wordsworth excluded some pieces from his published works and modified others, substituting, for example, fanciful for real names, as " Emmeline " for " Dorothy." Fortunately, he more often violated this law. Yet he has left us many a mystery. In the present instance, we can only guess that the friend whose coolness is the subject of " A Complaint " was Coleridge. Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, in the notes to his reprint of the " Poems in Two Volumes," asserts that " the friend was undoubtedly Coleridge," and, indeed, except Dorothy herself, there can hardly have been anyone else of whom Wordsworth could have written:

> Your love hath been, nor long ago,
> A fountain at my fond heart's door,
> Whose only business was to flow.

But the passages Mr. Hutchinson quotes from Coleridge's notebooks in support of his conjecture are not apposite. They are jottings made in Malta in 1805. The first reads:

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" One thing strikes me: the difference I find in myself during the past year or two. My enthusiasm for the happiness of mankind in particular places and countries, and my eagerness to promote it, seems to decrease, and my sense of duty, my hauntings of conscience, from any stain of thought or action to increase in the same ratio. I remember having written a strong letter to my most dear and honoured Wordsworth in consequence of his ' Ode to Duty,' and in that letter explained this as the effect of selfness in a mind incapable of gross self-interest —I mean, the decrease of hope and joy, the soul in its round and round flight, forming narrower circles, till at every gyre its wings beat against the *personal self*."*

In so far as this extremely subtle remark is particular and not general, it sprang from Coleridge's observation of *himself*, and I think Mr. Hutchinson is mistaken in supposing it to mean that Coleridge had observed a tendency to " selfness " in his friend. He goes too far also, I venture to say, in concluding from the following passage that Coleridge had perceived some falling-off of affection in Wordsworth; it is sufficiently obscure, however, to admit of more than one interpretation:

" The *thinking* disease is that in which the feelings, instead of embodying themselves in *acts*, ascend and become materials of general reasoning and intellectual pride. The dreadful consequences of this perversion [may be] instanced in Germany, *e.g.*, in Fichte *versus* Kant, Schelling *versus* Fichte, and in Verbidigno [Wordsworth] *versus* S. T. C. . . . On such meagre diet as feelings, evaporated embryos in their progress to *birth*, no moral being ever becomes healthy."†

It is true that this passage seems, from its context—if one may so speak of these *disjecti membra poetæ*—to have been written after Coleridge's return to England; but, judging from his habit of self-accusation, I should say he meant that he himself, not Wordsworth, was afflicted with the " thinking disease." His words are a precise psychological definition of a sentimentalist. No man, and especially no poet, was ever less of a sentimentalist than Wordsworth. This Coleridge knew,

* " Anima Poetæ," p. 110. † *Ibid.*, p. 143.

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while he also knew and bitterly lamented that the vice of sentimentalism, which he loathed, was bound to be the moral result of his own physical weaknesses. As we have seen, Dorothy Wordsworth lamented Coleridge's unwillingness to talk about either his affairs or those of his friends, at their meeting at Kendal, but there is no reason to think that he found Wordsworth grown cold towards him and in turn grew cold towards Wordsworth. "The Complaint," remains, therefore, a mystery.

The four sonnets long afterwards entitled "Personal Talk" show Wordsworth in an unusually familiar attitude. They express a mood and reveal some of his tastes. Later in life, to judge from conversations reported by lionizing visitors, he yielded only too often to the impulse of which we have here a first glimpse, and talked very complacently about himself, his likes and dislikes. In early manhood he was extremely reticent on such subjects, and his conversation was remarkably impersonal. With Coleridge he could spend whole days and nights in discourse on great themes. Far away in Sicily, poor Coleridge wrote a "serious memorandum," in October, 1804, upbraiding himself for miscellaneous judgments, and concluding: "Coleridge! Coleridge! will you never learn to appropriate your conversation to your company! Is it not desecration, indelicacy, and a proof of great weakness and even vanity, to talk to, etc., etc., as if you [were talking to] Wordsworth or Sir G. Beaumont?"*

Of pure tuneful lyric melody there is rich abundance in these poems. Perhaps the most exquisite example is

> O Nightingale! thou surely art
> A Creature of a fiery heart

—verses that begin with a wild cry of delight, in the boldest Elizabethan strain, and end with a gravely happy and strictly modulated passage:

> He sang of love with quiet blending,
> Slow to begin, and never ending;
> Of serious faith, and inward glee;
> That was the Song, the Song for me!

* "Anima Poetæ," p. 67.

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For ages, poets had heard the melancholy of the nightingale's varied voice; it had spoken to them of unforgotten wrong and sorrow; rarely had they—Milton was one of the exceptions—broken through the bonds of tradition and caught its tone of oblivious ecstasy. Musically, the transition from the stanza in which the nightingale warbles its allegro, to the one in which the stockdove gently measures out its "homely tale," is marvellous. To students of Wordsworth's life, the thought must come that he had now, whether through renunciation or through a withdrawal of the gift of the gods, ceased to vibrate habitually to the "tumultuous harmony and fierce" that echoes not seldom in his early songs. The Wordsworth of later years is all in the second stanza. If our experiences and sympathies are so much more limited than his that we can enjoy only the poetry of adventurous youth, his life and his art henceforth will not appeal to us. In that case, he might have died at the age when Shelley ceased, and we should be no losers. But far otherwise is it for us if we have the breadth and patience and wisdom to go with him into the second half of his existence, appreciating the value of completeness and integrity. It is, I hope, not too fanciful to suggest that we may hear in the first of these stanzas the wild and lonely Celtic wail, and in the second the steady, homely, and always sociable Saxon chant.

It has often been said, with an obvious degree of truth, but also with undiscriminating exaggeration, that Wordsworth was deficient in humour. No doubt he lacked the briskness for a quick return upon himself, the sceptical faculty, the sense of human littleness, by which most men protect themselves from being overwhelmed by the importance of nature, their fellows, and themselves. He was generally either too happy or too sad for humour, too deeply interested in what seemed to him the significant aspects of things. And it is true he was never humble. But we need not confound humility with humour. Admitting, as I suppose we must, some defect—and it is only too apparent if we

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think of him in connection with Scott and Coleridge, not to mention Lamb—fairness requires that three reasons why the world considers him devoid of humour should be utterly rejected. The first is that fashionable society and the subservient critics who voiced the cruel and absurd views of fashion were by *parti pris*, by vanity, and the instinct of self-preservation, determined to regard as unworthy of notice the simple people, scenes, and incidents, that Wordsworth made the subjects of his verse. If a poet chose Alice Fell as a heroine instead of some Angelica or Rosamond, he must, they declared, be a man without humour. And, secondly, Wordsworth did not "pose" well. He was not at ease among strangers. When he became celebrated, and visitors, often very solemn persons, or so frivolous they made him solemn, went on a pilgrimage to hear him talk, he injudiciously yielded to their desire, and discoursed, with a royal freedom and royal pride, about himself. He was too honest to pretend to think otherwise than as he really thought. He would not descend to Cæsar's artifice, who, after all, only tries to heighten his majesty by suppressing the first-person pronoun, or to Goethe's, who gave his worshippers the impression of being more interested in their affairs than in his own. The third injustice is one he himself did to himself, and yet at an age when he may well be pardoned, for he was no longer himself. When he dictated to Miss Fenwick, in 1843, those rambling, solemn, inexact, and often senile notes on his poems, he had already come within the shadow of death. But down to the point at which we have arrived, down to middle life, Wordsworth often shows a playful vein. We see it in his letters to Wrangham and in many short pieces of verse. "Peter Bell" was grossly misunderstood because it is a medley of deep seriousness and kindly humour.

And another long poem, composed in 1805, read from manuscript to Charles Lamb shortly afterwards, dedicated to that discriminating humorist in 1819, and appreciated by him, was conceived and executed throughout in a spirit of broad and genial playfulness. It was

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appropriately classified by its author as a poem of the fancy, though here and there it contains flashes of awe-struck imagination. The metre is fitted to the mood, octosyllabic couplets, alternating freely between iambics and trochees, and with here and there a feminine ending, a short line, or an irregular rhyme. It is a moving picture of the old highway between Ambleside and Keswick as seen by night and in a thunderstorm, when familiar objects are transformed and vague unrealities excite without subduing the mind. According to Wordsworth's noble and original theory, imagination deals with truth, with the permanent; fancy, with fleeting aspects of things and light impressions of the observer. "The Waggoner" is a typical application of this latter faculty. It falls into a class with many famous examples, such as the "Epistles" of Horace, nine-tenths of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan," and a considerable portion of Cowper's "Task," though I do not mean to assert that it equals any of these in sportive grace. It is valuable as showing Wordsworth completely at his ease, and serves also as an extreme boundary on one side of the vast field over which his genius extends.

There remains an important group of short poems written between 1803 and 1807 to which we have not adverted, poems expressing love of country and of liberty. At this period of his life, as heretofore, Wordsworth's religion was drawn from two sources—external nature, and the principles he deduced from human character. The latter may be summed up as a belief that liberty is a primary right of man, and essential to his welfare. He had not abated one jot of his social faith, though by this time convinced that France had thrown away her chance of leadership. As he looked over the world, it appeared to him that Britain was, after all, the strongest champion of liberty. Having accepted this conclusion in general, he straightway acted upon it, as we have seen in the case of the sonnets of 1802. The particular crisis brought about by Napoleon's threat of invasion made an opportunity not to be neglected with-

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out guilt, even though doubts and scruples may often have raised their heads. To a man so deeply affected by beauty, there must have been unspeakable joy in feeling free at last to celebrate, with a clear conscience, the incomparable beauty which is associated, in England, with practices of which Wordsworth had previously disapproved. An unbeliever is pitifully torn between conflicting principles and tastes when standing in some lovely English cathedral close. His reason disapproves of the institution; his memory dwells on historical incongruities; he wonders how, in the future, these edifices are ever to be related to the needs of men; on the other hand, his eye revels in the noble forms which he beholds, and his imagination would fain persuade him of their sacredness.

Wordsworth had now made up his mind what the general line of his conduct should be. But traces of the inner conflict had not all disappeared. Charles James Fox died September 13, 1806, and from Wordsworth's poem, " Loud is the Vale ! the Voice is up," in which he deplored the hourly expected dissolution of this liberal statesman and friend of the Revolution, calling him by implication " great and good," and a man " from God sent forth," we must infer that Fox's political principles were still not altogether contrary to his own.* Yet only two months later, having heard of the battle of Jena and the triumphant progress of French arms in North Germany, whence Napoleon threatened to blockade England, he calls on his countrymen to be " wise, upright, valiant," since they are " the last that

* In the manuscript mentioned in Vol. I., p. 149, occurs an anecdote written by Mrs. Davy in 1843. It refers to a meeting between Fox and Wordsworth which perhaps took place when the latter was returning from Calais, in 1802, or perhaps in the spring of 1806. It is as follows: "On July 11, Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth dined with us; . . . he spoke of Charles James Fox, and mentioned (the only such mention I ever heard from him) 'a *bon-mot* of my own.' It was when he and Fox were introduced to each other. Fox rose from a table, a card-table, I think, at which he was seated, and as he advanced to meet the Poet, said, ' I am glad to see Mr. Wordsworth, though we differ as much in our views of politics as we do in our views of poetry,' to which, said Wordsworth, I replied, ' But in poetry you must admit that I am the Whig and you the Tory.' "

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dare to struggle with the Foe." What is perhaps the grandest of his political sonnets followed a little later—"Two Voices are there; one is of the sea." Liberty is his theme again in the deep-felt sonnet, "To Thomas Clarkson, on the final passage of the bill for the abolition of the slave-trade, March, 1807," and here, certainly, he saw no divided duty. It is interesting that Dorothy Wordsworth, who was intimate with Wilberforce in her girlhood, was now the neighbour and dear friend of the Clarksons.

Wordsworth cultivated the sonnet more frequently in his boyhood and youth than one would be able to conjecture from his published works alone. In her letters from Forncett to Jane Pollard, Dorothy, it will be remembered, mentions her brother's sonnets. One of his earliest poems among those subsequently published was a sonnet, "Calm is all nature as a resting wheel." His study of Italian with Agostino Isola, his veneration for Milton, and his hard practice in translating Michael Angelo, gave him complete mastery of the form. The sonnet was to be henceforth the favourite vehicle of his opinions, as distinguished on the one hand from the records of his direct observation of nature, and on the other from the larger outlines of his philosophy. These opinions covered an extremely wide range—wider, I venture to say, than those of any other English poet in any age. If there be a contrary impression, it is due to the consistent personality which shows itself in them all, and not to a lack of variety in their subjects. Being vehicles of opinion, they are often passionately dogmatic. Some, however, and these among the very best, are free utterances of happy moods, made with no design except to receive and give pleasure. Even in these, however, the poet is still a teacher, though of general rather than systematic truths. Several sonnets of this kind were written, apparently, in 1806, as, for example, "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room," "The world is too much with us," "A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by," and the two splendid sea-pictures—"Where lies the Land to which yon ship must go?"

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and " With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh." Upon the last of these Wordsworth condescended to make an elaborate comment, in reply to a friend of Lady Beaumont, who thought he had fallen below himself in it:*

" There is," he writes, " scarcely any one of my poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution. For instance, in the present case, who is there that has not felt that the mind can have no rest among a multitude of objects, of which it either cannot make one whole, or from which it cannot single out one individual, whereupon may be concentrated the attention divided among or distracted by a multitude? After a certain time, we must either select one image or object, which must put out of view the rest wholly, or must subordinate them to itself while it stands forth as a head."

And he shows, in rather wearisome fashion, that this method is illustrated in his sonnet. " Pedantry!" we might say; " and the beginning of a bad habit, which grew upon him with age;" but we must remember that in the old Alfoxden days he and Coleridge were bent upon exemplifying in poetry the workings of the mind, It might be supposed that the purpose disclosed by his analysis of this sonnet was an afterthought, but a careful reading shows that the psychological process above indicated is really the central idea. That the poet could work in this way, and yet produce a fine, even though unimpassioned, piece of art, is quite remarkable. The four other and more beautiful sonnets, which I have just mentioned, also affect us not so much through our emotions of joy or pity or fear, as through a quiet kind of admiration. And this admiration is divided between the exquisite skill of the author and the delicate or noble objects suggested by him.

One of the last rewards of an intimate study of Wordsworth's works is that one comes to realize their architectonic unity. This is most impressive. One learns

* " Memorials of Coleorton," II. 12.

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to look for character and principle even in the slightest particular. There are no strokes of mere caprice. This great body of prose and verse is informed with one spirit. The whole is an organic union. The productions of one year prepare the reader insensibly for those of the next. So firm was Wordsworth's intellectual constitution that even the most seductive or overwhelming personal influences, while they often affected him deeply, began only after a considerable period to bear visible results. And when we take for granted that he has developed one great theme to the fullest extent possible for him, we find it recurring, transformed and broadened, but still the same. This is nowhere better shown than in the five major poems which were completed between 1805 and 1807—namely, the "Ode to Duty," "Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," and the ode on "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." In the first two of these, as I have before remarked, he appears to give up or greatly modify the "genial faith, still rich in genial good," which guided his younger days—faith in joy as the principle of a rich and useful life.* In the "Ode to Duty," the poet cannot forget, and is unwilling to condemn, the innocent souls who by their birthright, their divine heritage of essential goodness, live "without reproach or blot." The disciple of Rousseau and Godwin, still in revolt against the doctrine of innate depravity, even while recognizing that some natures fall, and need thenceforth the discipline of conscience, reserves a limbo of the innocents. I like to think he had in mind his sister. That he was conscious of his boldness in thus setting up his private faith against the creeds of Christendom is evident from a comparison of

* Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in a delightful article on "The Lake Poets in Somersetshire," published in Vol. XX. of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, says that his grandfather had a short name for the indispensable condition of creative genius: "He called it joy, meaning thereby not mirth or high spirits, or even happiness, but a consciousness of entire and therefore well being, when the emotional and intellectual faculties are in equipoise."

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the poem as printed, with the copy of the second and third stanzas published by W. Hale White from an original manuscript in the possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman. These cancelled stanzas are more outspoken than the form that was finally adopted. They read:

> There are who tread a blameless way
> In purity, and love, and truth,
> Though resting on no better stay
> Than on the genial sense of youth:
> Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
> Who do the right and know it not:
> May joy be theirs while life shall last
> And may a genial sense remain when Youth is past.
>
> Serene would be our days and bright;
> And happy would our nature be;
> If Love were an unerring light;
> And Joy its own security.
> And bless'd are they who in the main
> This creed, even now, do entertain,
> Do in this spirit live; yet know
> That Man hath other hopes; strength which elsewhere must grow.

These variances of text show that the poet was not merely groping towards a more finished expression of his thought, but hesitating between an extreme ethical idea and a more guarded one. The opening of yet another rejected stanza indicates that he made a distinction between conscience, as an inborn voice, and a sense of duty, as the result of experience:

> O Power of *Duty!* sent from God
> To enforce on earth his high behest,
> And keep us faithful to the road
> Which Conscience hath pronounc'd the best.

Professor Arthur O. Lovejoy, of the Johns Hopkins University, has kindly brought to my notice a possible connection between the "Ode to Duty" and a passage on "the Beautiful Soul" in Schiller's "Anmuth und Würde." It was a favourite idea with some of the German Romanticists that certain souls, through natural innocence, were secure from temptation, and needed not for their guidance the precepts of moral law. Theirs it

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was to bask in the sunlight of divine favour. Goodness in them was instinctive. So far as I can perceive, there was no firmer basis for this view than pure sentimentality. For the theological dogma of sanctification there was a doctrinal basis and more or less support in experience; Schiller's notion had, I suppose, only the warrant of congruity with the trend of contemporary feeling. It was, indeed, very characteristic of that strange, foolish revolt against law which was one of the main currents of Romanticism. German novels and poetry were full of *schöne Seelen*. So were the romances of Chateaubriand. A more recent example is the "Trilby" of George du Maurier. In behalf of these "characters" without character, the rules of the game of life were supposed to be relaxed. They could sin without blame or moral danger. That was the outcome,—the invention of an impossible type in fiction.

The passage in Schiller's essay may be loosely rendered as follows:

"In a beautiful soul the moral feeling in all the emotions has at length grown so secure that it can fearlessly leave to impulse the guidance of the will, without fear of contradiction from the latter. Therefore, in a beautiful soul, particular acts are not properly moral, but the whole character is. No particular acts, moreover, can be accounted praiseworthy, because the satisfaction of impulse can never be a subject of praise. The beautiful soul has no other merit than that she exists. With ease, as if mere instinct were at work through her, she performs the most painful human duties; and the most heroic sacrifice which she exacts from natural impulse strikes us as a voluntary effect of this very impulse. Hence she herself never perceives the beauty of her own conduct, and it never occurs to her that there could be other acts and other feelings; whereas a well-drilled pupil in the school of moral rules, obedient to his master's command, will be ever ready to give the strictest account of the relationship of his actions to the law."

I have found in an unpublished letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson (in the British Museum) an indication that she, too, had caught up this idea of

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a *schöne Seele*, who does what is right without effort. Speaking of Mrs. Rawson, of Halifax, she says: "Mrs. R., the very best-tempered woman and the most thoroughly intent upon doing what is right of any person I ever knew, and all without effort, from a blessed nature." The date—July, 1807—is significant.

The "Character of the Happy Warrior" was probably written either very late in 1805 or early in 1806, when the sad undercurrent of Wordsworth's thought, flowing from his brother's death, was brightening with pride in his noble life and final constancy. I attach only the smallest consequence to the note appended to the poem in the edition of 1807, stating that the death of Lord Nelson "directed the Author's thoughts to the subject," even though it is supported by a long Fenwick note to the same effect, and by a letter from Southey to Scott, dated February 4, 1806.* In several places, and for one in a letter to Beaumont, written February 11, 1806, enclosing a copy of the poem,† Wordsworth speaks of Nelson in very qualified terms. Moreover, there is much in the poem which is manifestly not applicable to him. It is by no means a eulogy on the military life. It is a portrait of a hero, in peace or in war. If a soldier is placable and compassionate, his gentleness is the more to be commended, because he is "doomed to go in company with Pain,

> And Fear and Bloodshed, miserable train."

The happy warrior, or hero, lives in obedience to an indwelling law. In the "Ode to Duty" this law is identified with the power that does "preserve the stars from wrong," a power universal, cosmic, and divine—

> L'amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle.

In man it is reason, "a power

> Which is our human nature's highest dower."

Thus far, the second poem is a magnificent illustration of the grand and general truths enunciated in the first.

* "Southey's Life and Correspondence," III. 19.
† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 215.

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But Wordsworth would not take these great steps forward in moral revelation without bearing along the sound and imperishable conquests of his earlier thinking. One of these, his own peculiar contribution to the store of human wisdom, was his sense of the sublime and prophetic in childhood. Reverence nature, was to him the first and great commandment; and the second was like unto it: Venerate the intuitions of childhood. Who, except Wordsworth, would have defined the hero as

> the generous Spirit, who, when brought
> Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
> Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought?

In these lines we have a spiritual link between the two poems whose theme is Duty, and the three that celebrate the divinity of Childhood and Nature. But before passing to the latter group, let us note that the "Character of the Happy Warrior" is, by its origin and its tone, an elegy. Wordsworth was unwilling to obtrude his private grief upon the world; with lofty and solemn reticence, he utters in this poem no direct word about his brother; his grief and consolation are raised to a noble generality. And when surmising what particular heroic figures were woven together in the composition, we must not forget Michel Beaupuy.

Down to the end of the minstrel's invocation—*i.e.*, to the hundred and fifty-sixth line—the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle" is nothing more than a splendid border ballad. We have the conventional short metre, the customary trappings of romance, the local names, the blending of popular tradition with mediæval history. Sir Walter might have been proud of having written it, and wrote as well more than once. Then comes the wonderful turn. In four grave decasyllabic quatrains, stately yet tranquil, the poet's own voice dispels the scene he has conjured up: the baronial hall, the scutcheons, arms, and tapestries, the throng of lords and ladies, the ecstatic minstrel, dissolve and vanish; the light of day, our own day, trembles through the fleeting shadows. We hear, with a feeling which

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would have been incomprehensible to the audience thus dismissed, how the Clifford's heart was " soothed and tamed." For being yet a child when nature received him to herself, he had grown up the wisest and best of his wild race:

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

The conception is modern; more than that, it is thoroughly Wordsworthian. Many a poet would have been content with the song, would have deemed it a complete work of art, sufficient in itself. The great and original genius of Wordsworth, the power that consecrated him to the sublime office of transmitting feelings that flow from *religious* perception, would not allow him to withhold the last touch, which made this poem immortal. The whole power of him is behind these four stanzas, the weight of his disciplined and constant purpose, the activity of his ardent love, the splendour of his intellectual light.

The great " Intimations " ode is a stumbling-block to prosaic and a temptation to over-speculative minds. To the former it seems a mass of disconnected though splendid beauties, and when they try to find its indwelling idea they either despise what they think they have discovered, as too thin and vague to be of much consequence, or condemn it as a profanely audacious attempt to meddle with things divinely hidden from human sight. To minds that love " those wingy mysteries in divinity, and airy subtleties in religion, which have unhinged the brains of better heads," the poem offers congenial employment. Wordsworth himself, in a most regrettable Fenwick note, made an unnecessary and almost humiliating concession to pragmatical and timid readers. " I think it right," he says, " to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief "—*i.e.*, belief in a prior state of exist-

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ence. "It is," he continues, "far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favour." This deprecation of popular judgment is unfortunate in several ways. Historically it misrepresents the author as he was when he wrote the ode, for there is no evidence that he then believed in a written "revelation," and every evidence that he did not believe in "the fall of man." And, furthermore, it has diverted attention from the central idea of the poem, an idea supported by his own experience and that of thousands, and has brought into undue prominence, even by denying his intention to do so, a subsidiary and purely speculative notion.

The ode was probably conceived in the spring of 1802, immediately after he had written the nine lines which are its germ, and of which he used the last three as its motto:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky:
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!
> The Child is father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

On March 26, 1802, Dorothy records in her Journal: "William wrote to Annette, then worked at 'The Cuckoo,'" and, listening to the cuckoo's song, we remember, he could beget again the golden time of childhood. In the evening of the same day, she adds, "he wrote 'The Rainbow,'" and next day "William wrote part of an ode." On June 17, she says, "William added a little to the Ode he is writing." The poem was continued at intervals during the next four years, and appeared in the edition of 1807, after which it was never much altered. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Wordsworth's statement in the Fenwick

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note that " two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part."

In these stanzas, with an exquisitely light touch, the poet describes an experience which perhaps is rare—I have known many persons to disclaim it for themselves —but which has startled many sensitively organized youths, observant of their mental states. It is an experience that vindicates for childhood a superior delicacy of perception, a superior impressibility as compared with later years. So vivid are these sensations, so deep these emotions, that long afterwards, in favourable moments, they flash into consciousness. Science would probably say that some hidden coil of the brain unrolls. The person to whom these forgotten memories recur connects them rather with some object or incident which appears to have occasioned them, and they are called " recognitions." We seem to perceive again something perceived long ago, and never since. It is like the repetition of a dream. To certain minds these flashes come not seldom, but chiefly before middle life. They illumine and measure the distance the soul has travelled, for they recall and place side by side with blunted and decaying faculties the fresh and glorious powers of unworn childhood. The momentary joy is succeeded by a sense of depression, as we realize that the years, our busy servants, have robbed us of life itself. This is the theme of those first four stanzas.

A natural deduction, and one, as we have seen, which Wordsworth would regard as highly significant, is that the perceptions and feelings of childhood have peculiar value. Compared with them, the testimony of later years is dull and confused. The moral instincts of childhood have a similar directness and vigour, and should be obeyed. The child, by his acute perceptions, his tense grasp of reality, and his unsophisticated habits of mind, is closer to truth than the man, and finds in nature an all-sufficient teacher. But here the poet checks himself, and he puts this inference to a test in the tenth and eleventh stanzas. The result marks a great change in his philosophy. Though acknowledging

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almost all that he had claimed for childhood, he remembers that there have been gains as well as losses, and sings:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Mankind claims him, and the sway of reason. But while thus extending his allegiance, he repeats his vows to nature:

> And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
> Forebode not any severing of our loves!
> Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
> I only have relinquished one delight
> To live beneath your more habitual sway.

The whole of "The Prelude" does not say more, as to the central principle that had governed Wordsworth's early life, and had lately been broadened, but not abandoned. A favoured childhood close to nature, the acceptance of Rousseau's doctrine of original goodness, a tempering due to rich experience of human love and reverent admission of painful duty—this is the history of Wordsworth's soul hitherto. The golden record runs through six great poems: "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe," "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," the "Ode to Duty," the "Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," and the "Intimations." A final great document in support of Wordsworth's creed is his "Answer to the Letter of Mathetes," published in *The Friend*, in 1809. Though I shall have more to say of it in its place, I cannot forbear quoting a glorious passage which restates the main theme of the "Intimations" ode. Speaking of the Generous Young Man, he says: "Granted that the sacred light of childhood is and must be for him no more than a remembrance. He may, notwithstanding, be remanded to nature, and with trustworthy hopes, founded less upon his sentient than upon his intellectual being; to nature, as leading on

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insensibly to the society of reason, but to reason and will, as leading back to the wisdom of nature. A reunion, in this order accomplished, will bring reformation and timely support; and the two powers of reason and nature, thus reciprocally teacher and taught, may advance together in a track to which there is no limit." And, again, he speaks of nature as "a teacher of truth through joy and through gladness, and as a creatress of the faculties by a process of smoothness and delight." Diffidence and veneration, he says, "are the sacred attributes of youth; its appropriate calling is not to distinguish in the fear of being deceived or degraded, not to analyze with scrupulous minuteness, but to accumulate in genial confidence; its instinct, its safety, its benefit, its glory, is to love, to admire, to feel, and to labour." As there are two types of mind, the synthetic and the analytic, the one that is impressed by resemblances and the one that feels differences, so in the individual are there creative as distinguished from critical faculties, and the former are most alert in childhood.

That the central theme of the ode is the magisterial sanctity of childhood is further indicated by the three lines from "The Rainbow" which the poet prefixed to it:

> The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

"Piety" is here used in its original sense, of reverence for filial obligation. The Man is to respect the Child surviving in him, to obey its monitions, to work upon its plan. What, then, is the subsidiary idea, which the Fenwick note unduly emphasizes, upon which commentators have spent themselves, and which, to be sure, is elaborately indicated in the title of the ode? It is a surmise, nothing more, that the excellence of childhood may be an inheritance from a previous and presumably superior state of existence. This is not, like the other idea, original with Wordsworth, in the only senses in which any such thought can be original—that is to say, either inborn or something conquered and assimilated. It was altogether derivative, extrinsic, and novel to him. It is connected with no other of his writings. It is

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alien to his mind. He habitually poetizes the facts of nature and human experience, shunning equally the cloudland of metaphysics and the light mists of fancy. But he had, as his soul's companion, the greatest speculative genius our race ever produced; and a dream of a prenatal state of the soul, superior in happiness and wisdom, had been embodied by Coleridge in a poem several years before. It is the "Sonnet composed on a journey homeward, the author having received intelligence of the birth of a son, Sept. 20, 1796":

> Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
> Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
> Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
> Mixed with such feelings, as perplex the soul
> Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said
> We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.
> O my sweet baby, when I reach my door
> If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead,
> (As, sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear)
> I think that I should struggle to believe
> Thou wert a spirit, to this nether sphere
> Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve;
> Did'st scream, then spring to meet Heaven's quick reprieve,
> While we wept idly o'er thy little bier.

In his note to this sonnet, in the edition of 1797, Coleridge acknowledged his indebtedness to Plato's "Phædo." Plato's argument, or perhaps we should call it his poetical suggestion, is that "if there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and an absolute essence of all things; and if to this, which is now discovered to have existed in our former state, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them, finding these ideas to be pre-existent and our inborn possession—then our souls must have had a prior existence."*

In Wordsworth this conception seems to have been merely derivative,—how different, therefore, from most of his ideas, to which the praise in Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria" so justly belongs, when he says (Chapter XXII.) that a characteristic excellence of Wordsworth's is "a weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won, not from books, but from the

* Jowett's translation.

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poet's own meditative observation." "They are *fresh*," he adds, "and have the dew upon them."

As one who habitually rises late can hardly believe his senses when he sees yesterday's commonplace world transformed by dawn into an enchanted garden of trembling roseate mysteries, so we wonder and so we doubt in reading the "Intimations" ode. Its radiance comes and goes through a shimmering veil. Yet, when we look close, we find nothing unreal or unfinished. This beauty, though supernal, is not evanescent. It bides our return, and whoever comes to seek it as a little child will find it. The imagery, though changing at every turn, is fresh and simple. The language, though connected with thoughts so serious that they impart to it a classic dignity, is natural and for the most part plain. The metrical changes are swift, and follow the sense as a melody by Schubert or Brahms is moulded to the text. Nevertheless, a peculiar glamour surrounds the poem. It is the supreme example of what I may venture to term the romance of philosophic thought.

If we bear in mind what is the important and profoundly Wordsworthian idea of the ode, and what the secondary and less characteristic notion appended to this, we shall find few difficulties of detail.*

* Dowden's interpretation of line 199,

Another race hath been, and other palms are won

—namely, that "the sun, 'like a strong man going forth to his race,' has now reached the goal and won the palm; and so with the life of man when death comes"—appears to me at fault. The palms for which the child strove were instinctive joys; the man has aimed at love and duty. The human heart has been disciplined by tenderness and fear, as well as by gladness, till now

The meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

I must confess that for many years I could not understand the fourth and fifth lines of the eleventh stanza. Several Wordsworthians whom I have consulted, among them Miss Arnold of Fox How, Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, and Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, agree in the following interpretation, as expressed by the last-named gentleman: "I have relinquished *one* delight—*i.e.*, the glory and the dream—with the result that I am living under Nature's more habitual sway, exchanging the spontaneous, intuitive response to Nature for a conscious and voluntary submission." Mr. Gordon Wordsworth says: "Perhaps the choice of the word 'relinquish' is unfortunate; we generally use it of a wholly voluntary act, and in this case it seems rather the inevitable result of the passing of time."

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CHAPTER XXIII

CRISIS OF MIDDLE LIFE

It is not known whether "The Prelude" as it was read to Coleridge at Coleorton in January, 1807, was not considerably retouched before Wordsworth's death. He was accustomed to revise his works with quite uncommon care. Although he made up his mind to withhold "The Prelude" from the public during his lifetime, its peculiar character would, I think, render it more subject to alteration than any of his other poems. As a rule, he made omissions and other changes for purely technical reasons, or to attain greater exactness in description, or to soften some extreme utterance of his early social views. Unless he had firmly resolved to let the first complete copy of "The Prelude" stand as final and unalterable, he would probably not have felt it right, in his conservative old age, to keep the record intact. And so it may be that we do not have "The Prelude" as it once was. Not only may passages have been withdrawn or rewritten, but it may no longer represent quite faithfully the spiritual condition of its author in the year 1805, let us say, and still less in an earlier year. Whether the poem was begun, as is commonly supposed, in 1799, or in 1802, there was time for a great inward change in Wordsworth before Coleridge's return from Malta. Any man narrating his own life selects, omits, and points its incidents according to his present spirit and purpose. If he be, like Wordsworth, convinced that his mission is to teach, this bias will be all the stronger. Some of the most accurate autobiographies have been written by great rogues. Some otherwise very good men have little confidence in mere

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truth. They must wing their arrows with their own feathers, or they do not care to shoot.

Even as it finally appeared, there are passages in "The Prelude" which are, I believe, the real cause of its being held back so long. Without utterly defacing the picture, Wordsworth could not have told the story of his early manhood more guardedly, and he feared that, even so, it might do harm. We must remember that one great national panic succeeded another while the poem lay waiting for the light. Napoleon was scarcely disposed of before "Reform" began to alarm the Tory mind; and between the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 there was little time to breathe. With an honourable though mistaken sense of obligation to mankind there may have coexisted a dread of the effect upon his own chosen course of life. Without minimizing the part played by modesty, I suggest that these other motives would be no less characteristic of Wordsworth. His conduct as we have observed it in his childhood, youth, and early manhood, was courageous, determined even to the point of obstinacy, and yet regulated by prudence in practical affairs. It was well said of him that he combined the qualities of a great poet and a country attorney. Had he been a member of Parliament, he would no doubt have attracted attention by a few great speeches, and gained the confidence of party leaders by his good judgment and steadiness of purpose. No man with so strong an imagination and so keen a feeling for beauty was ever bound by a stricter sense of responsibility.

The resultant of these inner powers and of certain external forces became apparent between 1803 and 1807. He was now middle-aged, a husband, a father, a property-owner. His confidence that through his writings he might affect the lives of his fellow-men was beginning to be somewhat widely justified. He looked forward to a future of influence, and seriously felt the responsibility attaching to intellectual leadership. The years of obscurity were past. In them, without much interference from the world, and with few concessions, he had gone

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through many agitating spiritual experiences. He had read and travelled at his own discretion. It was unlikely that any new discovery in the realm of thought would startle or greatly attract him. He had long enjoyed intimate relations with the most contagious mind then existing. Coleridge's absence and silence had thrown him back upon himself, and caused him to go through a process of *recueillement*, in which he had estimated, co-ordinated, and sealed his own principles. At an earlier stage he had swung far to one extreme in political and social philosophy. Farther in that direction he could hardly have gone. The apparent failure of the French Revolution and the real danger to English liberty from the ambitions of Napoleon made it necessary now to alter his course unless he were to become futile. Real consistency demanded a readjustment of the old principles to the new facts, rather than a reckless continuance in the course of protest. Yet his backward swing was not violent. Its momentum was retarded by many a surviving element of friction. No man, however, can resist altogether the influence of respected friends. The conservatism of Walter Scott was so clearly a legitimate and indispensable part of his large and attractive personality that Wordsworth, in becoming more intimate with him, was almost forced to admire his political principles. Sir George and Lady Beaumont were ornaments of their class, and in every way worthy of Wordsworth's affection. It is no wonder if association with them modified his views on the whole subject of class distinctions.

From results which became visible after a few years, we may surmise that a change was taking place in his attitude towards those institutions, practices, and modes of expression, by which religious feeling is outwardly manifested. I cannot believe that the foundations of Wordsworth's religion were really shaken either in middle life or in old age. Nature and experience were still, I think, the sources of his faith, reason its guide, and the whole round of life its proper sphere. But at this time he began to respect and appreciate, and later he learned

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to love, the specific means by which Christendom has attained and embodied religious conceptions. His own way had not been the beaten track, but he had never been either indifferent or intolerant in matters of religion, and now his interest really widened. He surrendered nothing of his own. He did not " go over " to popular Christianity. He learned to include it in the great circle of his sympathy. Unlike many others who have once been rationalists, and have later come into conformity with the Church, Wordsworth did not subject his reason to the sway of vague mystical impressions, did not call " belief " what was only hope and earnest longing. In a very considerable degree his acceptance of the terms and methods through which religion takes on a specifically Christian character was caused by political considerations. He had in view the general welfare of his country as well as his own personal needs. The elements common to the established Church and to Nonconformity were not what attracted him. It was rather the principle of establishment itself, the idea of a national conscience perpetually voicing its adherence to whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. In after-years he wrote much besides the " Ecclesiastical Sonnets " that may be described as Christian poetry; most of this, however, expresses not so often world-wide or even personal, as Anglican religion, considered with reference to national welfare. Though it is unfortunate that his genius should have thus limited its free play, we must remember that religion, in a far broader sense, was from the beginning, and continued to be always, the subject of his song. " The Old Cumberland Beggar," by the " semi-atheist " of 1798, is surely no less religious than the sonnet on " Old Abbeys " by the Churchman of 1822. Instead of an advance of faith, there was in the main a recession. In fixing his trust upon particular ordinances, he lost some of that generous and open-hearted feeling which is of the very essence of religion. In so far as he became the supporter of a system, he surrendered his freedom. In accepting a tradition he lost the gift of

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prophecy. Nature and the universal heart of man spoke to him less of their divine mysteries.

Other reasons besides those that moved Wordsworth were meanwhile determining Coleridge to a somewhat similar course. His writings after his return from Malta have a changed tone. He has become a child of the century. He has left the narrow but solid ledge of rationalism, and is groping through mystical seas. He curses what he once adored. From 1807 we may date his appearance as the champion of Christian theology. But this is a new Coleridge. And it is pertinent to observe that his distrust of reason was coincident with, and probably consequent upon, a decline in moral strength. He came home more terribly enmeshed than ever in his evil habit, and profoundly discouraged. As the keen-eyed Dorothy Wordsworth saw at once, he was no longer the same man. The glory was departed. He was heart-struck, reduced, humiliated. And here the eternal question rises: Does a man in that condition see the truth more or less clearly than one who treads the heights of reason? This is not a subject which can be treated here. It has been discussed amply and frankly in the famous parallel between Pascal and Montaigne in the third book of Sainte-Beuve's "Port Royal." We can only note the fact that there was a complete and fundamental change in Coleridge's philosophy, and prepare our minds to judge whether this would affect Wordsworth.

Few men pass through the crisis of middle life without a loss of ideality. Wordsworth escaped this. But it cannot be denied that, while he held to his ideals with unweakened grasp, many of them were different from those of earlier years. He lost much of his confidence in human nature. His sympathies became less general. His admiration went out more and more to the privileged classes, to persons of distinction, to notable events in history. The poor and humble still figured in his poetry, but in smaller proportion, in a less true proportion, considering the part they play in life. Liberty remained dear to him; but equality, which was a vastly

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more important and imperilled principle, now became a matter for doubt and endless qualifications. The change may not have amounted to apostasy; it was certainly reaction.

The crisis was sharp. Its result was unmistakable. It affected the course of his life and the character of his poetry. Looking at him as he stands in 1807, having then completed the five great poems which embodied the philosophy of his early manhood, and begun "The Excursion," which represents a later stage, we realize that his opinions henceforth will have a very definite trend. He has still a long life to live, but its vicissitudes will be slight, its outward history peaceful, its inner changes gradual and in one direction. Even had he not written any poetry, his life down to this point would have been worth telling; he would have a place among the English friends of the Revolution; and if he had expressed his philosophy in prose alone, he would remain an authority in æsthetic criticism. After 1807 his life is of interest almost solely for the sake of his art. For there is nothing else that distinguishes its last four decades, in any singular degree, from the lives of many other Englishmen of his time. Letters, anecdotes, records of his conversation, and other biographical material, are far more abundant for this later period than for the years when he was comparatively obscure. Owing to this fact, it is the aged Wordsworth that the world knows most about, and this is extremely unfortunate.

But I cannot agree with the opinion that he had produced nearly all his good work before 1808. His art, both as poet and as prose-writer continued to grow, and some of its most interesting developments occurred long afterwards. It still had fresh turns and quickenings. His versatility was only very gradually exhausted. His technical skill was never lost. Moreover, there came to him with passing years a deepening of conviction, which gave him increasing authority on many subjects.

We have observed a change in Wordsworth, due partly to the natural crisis of middle age, partly to dis-

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appointment at the course of political events, and partly to association with a new set of friends who held conservative views. The criticism with which his publications from 1800 to 1807 were met was not without its effect also. Sturdy as he was in holding fast to principles, he often found it possible to modify their application, or even to alter them if good cause were shown. This can be seen in the numerous revisions to which he subjected his poems. He took advice cautiously, even grudgingly, but, on the whole, the remarkable fact is that he took so much. By far the most telling criticism was that which appeared in *The Edinburgh Review*. It was scarcely the less effective because some of the articles dealt with his poetry indirectly, being reviews of Southey's books. It is amusing enough now to find Wordsworth and Southey dragged into court together, on a charge of rebellion against the laws of taste. Southey is treated as the more prominent and well-known offender. But a suspicion is entertained that in some way Wordsworth is the deeper and more dangerous conspirator. There has never been any justification for the term " the Lake School of Poets." Coleridge lived only a few years in the Lake country, and his poetry shows hardly any traces of that residence. To associate Southey's poetry in this way with Wordsworth's is to use language without thinking of its meaning. But the phrase originated early, and was, though misleading, convenient for reviewers. It was thought desirable to hold Wordsworth responsible for the poetical mediocrity of Southey, and to find them both guilty of entertaining the social heresies which Southey had long before recanted.

The Edinburgh Review was founded in 1802. In its first number appeared an article on Southey's "Thalaba." Ample satisfaction was here given to those conscientious scruples expressed in the motto of the magazine: *Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur*. It was written by Francis Jeffrey, who had been waiting for an opportunity to controvert the doctrine contained in Wordsworth's prefaces and exemplified in " Lyrical Ballads."

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Jeffrey had a high appreciation of good literature, ancient and modern, a high sense of the importance of poetry, and a sincere desire to protect the public from false teaching. The great value of the noble works included within the circle of his taste made him hesitate to break the ring at any point in order to include something new and different. But he was not unreasonable. He disapproved of Wordsworth's innovations on very strong grounds. To anyone holding Jeffrey's view of human nature they must ever be sufficient grounds. And in forming this view he showed remarkable penetration and a characteristically vigorous, massive way of pushing through evidence to a sound judgment of causes and motives. To suppose that his adverse opinion of Wordsworth's poetry was determined solely, or even chiefly, by the fact that he had a strong taste for the "classics," or, in other words, that he was so hampered by literary prejudices as to be unable to accept a novel artistic doctrine, is to do injustice to his intellectual alertness. The trouble lay deeper. His heart had not been touched by a true sense of human brotherhood. His prejudice was political. It might, indeed, better be termed religious; for it originated in a fundamental unwillingness to acknowledge the divinity in man. It is startling to find that the first words of his review of "Thalaba" stamp him at once as an enemy of the living light: "Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question." False as this statement is in both of the propositions involved, it has a doctrinal, not an æsthetic basis. That he was preparing to attack Wordsworth as well as Southey is shown in the next paragraph, which begins: "The author who is now before us belongs to a *sect* of poets that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years. . . . That they are *dissenters* from the established systems in poetry and criticism is admitted, and proved, indeed, by the whole tenor of their compositions."

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He remarks with creditable acumen that some of their leading principles "seem to have been borrowed from the great apostle of Geneva." He denies them any real originality, and detects as first among the sources of their material "the anti-social principles and distempered sensibility of Rousseau—his discontent with the present constitution of society—his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankerings after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection." If the venturesome word "unattainable" and the slanderous word "voluptuous" were omitted from this charge, it would be just in every particular. The critic has discovered the real origin of what was most dynamic in the new poetry. He has laid bare its connection with a revolutionary view of society. He has also, by his hostile and contemptuous tone, disclosed his own position, and bound himself to a definite course of action. He is aware of what the new movement involves. These authors, he declares, "constitute at present the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgment in matters poetical, and are entitled to a larger share of our censorial notice than could be spared for an individual delinquent." Setting aside for a moment their moral and political tendencies, he engages in a specious and plausible argument against the theory of diction and choice of subject propounded in Wordsworth's Preface to "Lyrical Ballads."

"Their most distinguishing symbol," he says, "is undoubtedly an affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language. They disdain to make use of the common poetical phraseology, or to ennoble their diction by a selection of fine or dignified expressions. . . . A poet who aims at all at sublimity or pathos is like an actor in a high tragic character, and must sustain his dignity throughout, or become altogether ridiculous. . . . The language of the higher and more cultivated orders may be presumed to be better than that of their inferiors: at any rate, it has all those associations in its favour by means of which a style can ever appear beautiful or exalted, and is adapted to the purposes of poetry by having been long consecrated to its use."

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How completely the best of Wordsworth's poetry refutes this aristocratic argument we need not discuss. Still easier is it to perceive the fallacy of Jeffrey's next argument. He goes on to say:

"The chief mischief of this new system is not confined to the depravation of language only; it extends to the sentiments and emotions, and leads to the debasement of all those feelings which poetry is designed to communicate. . . . The different classes of society have each of them a distinct character, as well as a separate idiom. . . . The love, or grief, or indignation, of an enlightened and refined character is not only expressed in a different language, but is in itself a different emotion from the love, or grief, or anger, of a clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench. The things themselves are radically and obviously distinct. . . . The poor and vulgar may interest us, in poetry, by their *situation*; but never, we apprehend, by any sentiments that are peculiar to their condition, and still less by any language that is peculiar to it."

The absurdity of such remarks is sufficiently apparent now, but we are in danger of forgetting that they probably met with the approval of most subscribers to *The Edinburgh Review* in 1802. And it is useful to read them now, in order to appreciate Wordsworth's originality and courage, and the extent of his ultimate triumph. But the passage which indicates Jeffrey's real animus—which, moreover, he takes no pains to conceal—is the following, in which he describes the moral character of the "new school":

"A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments. Instead of contemplating the wonders and the pleasures which civilization has created for mankind, they are perpetually brooding over the disorders by which its progress has been attended. They are filled with horror and compassion at the sight of poor men spending their blood in the quarrels of princes and brutifying their sublime capabilities in the drudgery of unremitting labour. For all sorts of vice and profligacy in the lower orders of society, they have the same virtuous horror and the same tender

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compassion. While the existence of these offences overpowers them with grief and confusion, they never permit themselves to feel the smallest indignation or dislike towards the offenders."

Except for the gratuitous term "splenetic and idle," could the most enthusiastic eulogist have penned loftier praise? Could a clearer title to the name of Christian patriot have been bestowed upon the two poets? But Jeffrey thought he was condemning, not justifying, and he continues, in a vein of mean sarcasm:

"The present vicious constitution of society alone is responsible for all these enormities: the poor sinners are but the helpless victims or instruments of its disorders, and could not possibly have avoided the errors into which they have been betrayed. Though they can bear with crimes, therefore, they cannot reconcile themselves to punishments; and have an unconquerable antipathy to prisons, gibbets, and houses of correction, as engines of oppression and instruments of atrocious injustice. While the plea of moral necessity is thus artfully brought forward to convert all the excesses of the poor into innocent misfortunes, no sort of indulgence is shown to the offences of the powerful and rich. Their oppressions and seductions and debaucheries are the theme of many an angry verse; and the indignation and abhorrence of the reader is relentlessly conjured up against those perturbators of society and scourges of mankind."

It is worth while to remind ourselves that in 1802 poor men were still liable to be savagely punished for poaching and other venial offences, and that embezzlement, bribery, and the purchase of promotion, were practised with comparative immunity by the powerful and rich.

The accuracy of Jeffrey's description and the sagacity of his attack are marred by only one error: he concludes his essay with the statement that Southey has sacrificed to the glory of the new school "greater talents and acquisitions than can be boasted of by any of his associates."

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In *The Edinburgh Review* for October, 1805, Jeffrey criticizes Southey's "Madoc," and again abuses the supposed "school." Southey we must leave to his fate Coleridge does not appear to have been very definitely in the reviewer's mind. The grand conspirator was Wordsworth, and it was at him especially that the charge was directed: "An affectation of infantine innocence and simplicity; an affectation of excessive refinement and preternatural enthusiasm; and an affectation of a certain perverse singularity of learning, taste, and opinions." Virgil, Pope, and Racine, are mentioned as "a party respectably established," with whom it would have been wiser for Southey to ally himself.

Jeffrey's grand opportunity came when Wordsworth's "Poems in Two Volumes" appeared in 1807. Losing no time, he flew to the attack, in the October number of *The Edinburgh*. He advanced joyously,

> Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.

Exulting, he unmasked his batteries, for this time the enemy was fully exposed. But what was the real purpose of these preparations? To crush the spirit out of a sensitive and happy man who, because he was more sensitive and more deeply happy than others, had felt impelled to take the world into his confidence as to the sources of his innocent delights; to shame him for telling of his childlike intimacy with nature; to make him resolve never again to lift the veil of conventional reticence. The only conceivable excuse for Jeffrey's onslaught is that he sincerely regarded Wordsworth as a menace to society. The means invoked were altogether disproportionate to any purely æsthetic offence. Yet, even had he been assailing an enemy of public welfare, we should still feel that a coarse mind and a malevolent spirit directed the attack. The probability that he was deeply and perhaps fatally injuring a man who he acknowledged had genius, and whose intentions it was outrageous to suppose wicked, did not stay his hand. If one had grown up with a certain moderate attachment to Wordsworth's poetry and a general feeling of

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respect for his name, a perusal of this review would probably convert the attachment into ardour and the respect into affection; it is so unfair, so gross, so atrocious.

The author expresses his relief that the demerits of the Poems free him from all doubt or hesitation as to the justice of his former censures of "Lyrical Ballads." He regrets that he did not declare himself against that work "with still more formidable and decided hostility." Five years of violent writing, however, have in reality rendered him less formidable than he was in 1802; instead of argument we now find mere vituperation. He shows his inability to perceive the spiritual, ennobling nature of poetry, by objecting to Wordsworth's 'connecting his most lofty, tender, or impassioned conceptions with objects and incidents which the greater part of his readers will probably persist in thinking low, silly, or uninteresting." Proceeding on this level, it is easy for him to ridicule some of the poems called forth by household and neighbourhood incidents; but when he declares that in the "Ode to Duty" "the lofty vein is very unsuccessfully attempted," and confesses his utter inability to understand the lines,

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong.

we feel that it is not intelligence or taste that he lacks so much as good-will. Of "Alice Fell," as pure a work of art as was ever produced, simple, unpretending, uncompromised by any very obtrusive moral, a clean bit of etching, he can only say: "If the printing of such trash as this be not felt as an insult on the public taste, we are afraid it cannot be insulted." Of "Resolution and Independence," he says coarsely: "We defy the bitterest enemy of Mr. Wordsworth to produce anything at all parallel to this from any collection of English poetry, or even from the specimens of his friend Mr. Southey." When we realize how tender were the associations connected with the lines called "The Sparrow's Nest," memories of early childhood and of Dorothy, we

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shrink from the thought of their being profaned by the critic's sneering comment. It seems incredible that Jeffrey could have found nothing to praise in the exquisite lines "To the Cuckoo." The "Intimations" ode causes him to affect a bewilderment and an insensibility of which even he was incapable. To lend point to his contempt for what is peculiar to Wordsworth, he gives a treacherous approval to a few of the poems, which are written on conventional subjects or in a conventional manner, choosing for this doubtful favour several of the anti-Gallican sonnets and the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle."

One tell-tale omission shows the depth of his dishonesty. The Song exists for, and leads up to, the four great quatrains which conclude the poem. They are known to all lovers of English poetry, not one of whom probably would fail to give the palm to the second:

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
> His daily Teachers had been Woods and Rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

Jeffrey quotes the three other stanzas, and omits this!

Finally, after denouncing Wordsworth's poetry as trash, except "when, by any accident, he is led to abandon his system, and to transgress the laws of that school which he would fain establish on the ruin of all existing authority," he retires with the complacent sense of having crushed this offensive "caterpillar of a commonwealth."

Byron's cruel and ignorant attack in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," 1808, helped to form in the public mind a false notion of Wordsworth. The lines that concern him are as follows. Pretending to address Southey, Byron says:

> Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
> That mild apostate from poetic rule,
> The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
> As soft as evening in his favourite May.
>
> * * * * *

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Who both by precept and example shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose.

* * * * * *

Yet let them not to vulgar Wordsworth stoop,
The meanest object of the lowly group,
Whose verse, of all but childish prattle void,
Seems blessed harmony to Lambe and Lloyd.

It cannot be denied that Wordsworth was affected by the hostile criticism of Jeffrey and a number of less influential reviewers. Owing to several other causes, and yet also to this criticism, he drew inspiration henceforth far less directly from nature and more from history than had been his wont. The episodes of his own everyday life and of the simpler lives of dalesmen and chance wayfarers ceased almost suddenly to give him material for poetic interpretation. How complete the change was may be seen by merely examining a table of his poems, arranged by years, in the order of composition. Between the completion of "The White Doe of Rylstone," in 1807 and 1808, and the writing of "Laodamia," "Dion," and "Yarrow Visited," in 1814, lie six or seven relatively barren years, though, of course, it must be remembered that in them "The Excursion" came to maturity. More significant than their infertility is the character of their lean product. The subjects bear no resemblance to those formerly chosen, and many startling examples of reversion to conventional poetic diction might be cited, of which no others, perhaps, are so extreme as the first lines of a poem written in 1812:

Mark how the feathered tenants of the flood, etc.

It really seems as if Jeffrey had succeeded in making him pay "due honour and authority" to "that ancient and venerable code," the "established laws of poetry." But so many other influences were at work on the poet, and the results were so complex, that we must consider this epoch of his life more closely later, and meanwhile revert to "The Prelude," which was finished, at least in its original form, in 1805.

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It is not my intention to present an analysis of this poem. It should be read as Wordsworth's own comment, in later years, upon his education in childhood and youth. We have already seen that as a source of exact information regarding his actions in that period it is by no means sufficient. One cannot, indeed, be sure that in its present form it is a description of his intellectual growth as reviewed prior to 1805; for his habits of composition were such that he must almost inevitably have altered it later. At all events, no one could interpret it more convincingly than M. Legouis has done, or extract from it more faithfully the autobiographical values which it contains. It was kept in manuscript until after the poet's death, when it was published under the supervision of his secretary, Mr. Carter. The title, which is not a happy one, was suggested at that time by Mrs. Wordsworth.

It had been the poet's intention to write a long philosophical work entitled "The Recluse," in three parts. Of the first of these, only one book, containing 753 lines, was written. This was not published until 1888, since when it has been known as "Home at Grasmere" and "A Fragment of The Recluse." The second is "The Excursion," and is complete. The third was never written. When "The Excursion" was published, in 1814, Wordsworth, in his Preface, made the following reference to the earlier work, now generally esteemed the greater, which we call "The Prelude":

"It may be proper to state whence the poem, of which 'The Excursion' is a part, derives its Title of THE RECLUSE.—Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply

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indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society; and to be entitled, 'The Recluse,' as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.—The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

Wordsworth, writing to Sir George Beaumont on June 3, 1805, about a fortnight after finishing the poem, said that it was far below what he deemed himself capable of executing. It is possible that this feeling continued. I am inclined to think, however, that what restrained him from printing it was a sense that it might do harm in a period when he thought that the higher interests of civilization were threatened by a levelling tendency from which he was in duty bound to withhold even such encouragement as might be derived from his picture of the Revolution. Many efforts have been made to establish a chronology for the opening passages of the first book. It has long been held that the first forty-five lines were composed in Germany, upon leaving Goslar. But the reference to " the vast city " in line 7 points to London. One possible view is that these lines record his feelings on leaving London for Racedown, in 1795, and were even composed at that time. At line 46 he makes a fresh start, some time afterwards, perhaps in Germany, writing now in retrospect, and continuing the narrative of that first day down to line 131. The

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description of his mental state corresponds with what we know of his condition in the autumn of 1795:

> Escaped
> From the vast city, where I long had pined
> A discontented sojourner: now free,
> Free as a bird to settle where I will.

He speaks, in lines 20-23, of having shaken off the burthen of his own unnatural self,

> The heavy weight of many a weary day
> Not mine, and such as were not made for me.

He tells us it was autumn (line 65), whereas we know that he left Goslar in midwinter. "The stately grove of oaks" (line 82), where he paused and looked back at "the curling cloud of city smoke" (line 88), and from which an easy journey of three days (line 106) brought him to his hermitage, may have been at Windsor, or some other point on the Thames, where he paused on his way to Racedown. He mentions the river in line 30. The reference in lines 121-124 to an unsuccessful attempt to free his heart by artistic creation suggests "The Borderers." As opposed to this explanation must be reckoned the references in line 72 to a "known Vale," and, furthermore, the opening of Book VII., written, it has been generally supposed, in the autumn of 1804:

> Six changeful years have vanished since I first
> Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze
> Which met me issuing from the City's walls)
> A glad preamble to this Verse.

If we have recourse to a theory that the opening of Book I. records his emotions on leaving Sockburn for Grasmere in 1799, there remain obviously several difficulties—the "vast city," "autumn," and, indeed, the "six" years still. The passage is certainly not allegorical; Wordsworth never uses allegory in this way. But he often blended and blurred his references to facts in his own life. Indeed, this was his regular procedure.

The first two books of "The Prelude" were probably finished before the end of 1800; the third, fourth, fifth,

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and sixth, written between February and April, 1804; the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh, between the beginning of October and the close of that year; and the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth, in the spring of 1805. But some passages are known to have been written earlier than the context in which they now appear. Among these are the sixty-three lines in Book I. beginning "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe," which were written in Germany; the passage in Book V. beginning "There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs," also written in Germany; the fragments of "Vaudracour and Julia," printed at the end of Book IX., which certainly date, in some sense, from 1792; and a passage of thirty-five lines in Book XIII., beginning "There are who think that strong affection, love," which, according to Professor Knight, was written, with sundry variations of text, in a manuscript book of Dorothy Wordsworth, dated May to December, 1802. There may be, and probably are, many other passages of early origin welded into the poem. And, on the other hand, many a reticence, many a smoothing touch, many a pious reflection, seem to be the results of revisals made by Wordsworth long after 1805, when the poem was nominally completed. The entire work had a threefold object: to test the poet's powers, to pay a tribute to the friendship and genius of Coleridge, and to serve as an introduction to "The Recluse." Its subject is nominally the growth of a poet's mind, and, indeed, many of the traits and experiences which it records are typical. Nevertheless, "The Prelude" is less remarkable for generality than for particularity. It really describes the spiritual development of its author. Wordsworth was a little apprehensive lest his friends might think him conceited in writing to the extent of nearly eight thousand lines about himself. He protested that his real feeling was diffidence and a shrinking from the more elaborate task of writing "The Recluse."

Where fate has played a part is in the fact that the author of this poem was a young man during the most important crisis in human history since the Reforma-

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tion, and was drawn, by some power beyond our calculation or his, to the central scene of that great drama. Had he been born ten years earlier or later, the story of his life would have mattered much less to the world. In spite of many inferior passages and some that are obscure; in spite of frequent prolixity; in spite of many a page dulled with pedantic terms taken from the jargon of psychology, terms that retain no sensuous colour or movement whatever, and are mere intellectual counters, "The Prelude" is the greatest long poem in our language after "Paradise Lost." One might break it, somewhat rudely, into three consecutive parts: the first describing, in fragmentary fashion, the poet's boyhood and youth, and the scenes amid which he grew up; the second, more compact and continuous, narrating his experiences in France; and the third, speculative and dogmatic, setting forth a theory of the mind and of nature, and of their mutual relations. It is only in the last three books that this third subject entirely predominates. The first eleven books are less abstract. Readers to whom Wordsworth's philosophy seems unsubstantial in its foundations and narrow in its superstructure may therefore find satisfactions of their own in the poem. But Wordsworth, with some awkwardness, it is true, tries to convince us that all parts of it are contributory to certain conclusions of a highly abstract kind. Happily, its high fortune does not depend entirely on the success of this endeavour. And yet there the endeavour is, and we must not lose sight of it.

In protest against the old psychology, which contented itself with classifying the powers of the mind, as intellect, feelings, and will, with their further analysis, he declares that the mind is one. Its thoughts have their source in feeling, and of feeling there is no conscious beginning. He seems to imply some sort of continuity between the soul of a new-born child and a larger, pre-existent life. He insists on the superiority of the "living mind" to all external things, and glorifies Imagination as a power which can work with nature and even constrain her. By thus exalting the mind of

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man above " the frame of things " as having an existence independent of nature, he places himself among the Transcendental philosophers. Not only in " The Prelude," but frequently in his other speculative poems, he proclaims himself a philosophical idealist. This view of the relation between man and nature was not his when he wrote the " Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey " in 1798. Although even then the time was past when nature aroused merely

> a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye,

yet he would then have considered it blasphemy to speak of the mind of man as overleaping nature. He had recently learned to hear " the still, sad music of humanity," but he had also become aware of

> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things,

and was

> well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense
> The anchor of *his* purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of *his* heart and soul,
> Of all *his* moral being.

That was the vision of a free, undaunted spirit, one who was not afraid to be called " a semi-atheist," and who did not care whether the promptings of his genius chimed with orthodox theology. One of the purposes of " The Prelude," painfully and redundantly achieved, is to renounce this pantheism, for it is nothing less. Wordsworth was travelling with Coleridge, with German philosophy, with his age. He was reacting against the great positive, naturalistic movement of the preceding century. He was breaking with his own past, abandoning his own faith. There are many reasons for regretting that he lost courage or hope at this point. Had he held fast to what was surely no debasing materialism and no morally enervating pantheism, he might have continued to be a living bond between the highest thought of the

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eighteenth century and that revival of science which was coming presently, and which makes the interval of reaction appear a time of weak fears and cowardly refusals. And there will always be readers who feel that his truest and least imitable poems are those in which he is content to follow nature, as one who finds in her all he needs to know. However honourable the scruples and the sense of responsibility which caused him to recede from that spontaneous acknowledgment of nature as a divine power, superior to man and yet approachable by man in a spirit of kinship, the step involved more than a sacrifice; it was a moral error. Ought not he to have remained content, to whom had been vouchsafed high intercourse with something so divine as the voice which spoke to him near Tintern Abbey, or the Wisdom and Spirit of the universe which still held fellowship with him in Germany?

Whether or not we regret that he left vacant the priesthood which had once been his, and which Shelley was to accept later, we must acknowledge that there was more loss than gain for poetry. "The Prelude" relates only the beginning of the change. One is left to infer, on finishing its perusal, that the poet, having lost joy, the vital principle of poetic creation, has at length recovered it, and thus passed safely through the only danger to which his genius was liable. But the recovery of joy was followed by complacency, and this by self-consciousness, and this again by timidity. Of his complacency we have a foretaste in "The Prelude" itself, especially in the eighth book. He seems to be consciously leading up to a triumphant proclamation of his own success in obtaining a right view of nature and of man. This fault shows itself only in certain reflective passages—in those, namely, which appear to have been written in 1805 or inserted later. The passages of real reminiscence are free from it. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh books, which relate his experience in France, are more vivid and spontaneous, more fluently written, and more unhampered by "system," than the other parts of the poem. A great theme, sufficient for epic

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treatment, here gave him something of the epic poet's detachment. Considering "The Prelude" not now as the unfolding of a philosophy, but as a narrative, these books constitute its climax. It becomes more evident, at every reading, that his spiritual connection with the Revolution made him a thinking, suffering man. This connection gave him what Newman describes as "the true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values and determining their mutual dependence." He went to France a susceptible boy; he returned a man, with a philosophy and a purpose.

It is a thousand pities that he renounced this philosophy and changed this purpose. When they ruled him, and even while they were loosening their hold upon him, he wrote his best poetry. As a pæan of triumph the conclusion of "The Prelude," therefore, extending over the last three books, is premature. He upbraids himself for having "scanned the moral world," and we ask, Without this moral scrutiny where would have been his contributions to "Lyrical Ballads"? He is at pains to renounce reason, having found a better guide in an instinctive reliance upon nature and the immemorial customs and faiths of mankind; but the time was at hand when instincts were to be interpreted as accumulated acts of reason. In the last book of all, which is relied upon to impress us most, we find his new attitude fully delineated. The author has now formally set up as a teacher of safe philosophy. His tone is pietistic, his plan drearily systematic, his language abstruse. He sees not men and women so much as bundles of psychological traits. He professes to have found or invented a new instrument for compelling nature to give up her secrets, and by means of it claims the power of looking beyond her mere facts to her spiritual laws.

This instrument, which he defines with elaborate care and describes as a transcendent function of poetic minds, is Imagination. The distinction which he draws be-

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tween Imagination and Fancy does not always seem clear; they often appear to differ only in degree. But Wordsworth considered it vital. However that may be, the fourteenth book is an anticlimax. The style is neither fresh and simple, as in some of the earlier parts, nor dignified and austere, as in many high places throughout the poem. It is a style he rarely, if ever, used before 1805, but only too often in later years. Pure, colourless intellectual terms loom up like icebergs in almost every sentence. Of sensuous quality there is very little. The passion seems forced. The diction is almost as far removed as possible from "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." That the boldness of Wordsworth's genius has vanished is shown even by so small a matter as the frequent recurrence of the cautious double negative, the use of which became one of his worst habits of composition—*e.g.*, "endowments not from me withheld," "no insufficient plea," "not unworthy of regard." The summary of the entire poem, as given in the fourteenth book, describes the stilling of a noble struggle. Somehow the poet's early solicitude for human welfare, the agonizing sympathy and the audacious hope, are set aside as evil; satisfaction with nature's balm and the established order of society replaces the old yearning, and is hailed as a moral conquest.

One curious detail must be noticed: the poet dates his change of heart much earlier than a careful study of his life would seem to warrant. We have seen that his conversion was scarcely begun before 1805. Yet, by foreshortening the time, he gives the impression that it occurred ten years before. It is very strange, for example, that in the seventh book, entitled "Residence in London," he records chiefly the mere surface-shows of the town, street scenes and public amusements, when we know, from the evidence of his letter to Bishop Watson and much else, that his mind was busy with deeper and more engrossing affairs. The fine humanitarian tone of that passage (Book XIII., lines 186-220), which dates from 1802, proves that the change had not come when it was written.

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CHAPTER XXIV

PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE AND MAN

WORDSWORTH'S genius, at its best, expressed itself in three large groups of poems corresponding more or less closely to three periods of his life. The poems of each group are related to one another, in that they refer to the same class of subjects and are bound together by a common purpose: the first group comprises most of his early works, their subjects being the unadorned features of nature and some of the common incidents of life which fell under the poet's observation, and the ruling purpose being the quite simple one of representing the truth, and of communicating the joy and strength which he derived from life. These poems were of a new kind. They represent the union of exact knowledge with creative imagination, of plain language with passionate feeling. They are at one and the same time science and art. They imitate nature without attempting to interpret her, implying thus the most profound reverence. Wordsworth as here we see him is almost unique among poets, and certainly supreme in this kind. "Lucy Gray" will perhaps be remembered when all other English poetry of the century has been forgotten. The period ends almost abruptly in 1807.

The second group comprises those fine high endeavours of his to penetrate to a soul of things supposed to lie behind nature's impassive face. So long as Wordsworth remained faithful to his old ideals and constant in courage and self-confidence, his philosophy, too, is of the highest order of originality. We have in the "Intimations," for example, a kind of poetry entirely different in origin and purpose from the direct type just described; but it

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is almost equally characteristic of Wordsworth, and almost as lonely in its excellence. The period when Wordsworth could produce such poetry extended scarcely farther than 1807.

Throughout the rest of his life, except for a few instances when the spirit of his youth revived, his observation was oblique, and his reflective powers were dominated by principles not formerly his own, and not easily reconcileable with the best that he had been. Of the immense number of poems which he wrote in these last forty years, nearly all are upon a high level of attainment; but standing alone they would not suffice to justify a claim of great superiority, except in one kind of work—that is, the historical and political sonnet. Large as is his achievement in this third kind of characteristic excellence, he is by no means so great here as in his poems of simple life and his poems of pure reflection. "The Prelude" stands in the centre of his life-work because it represents all three of these kinds. It is based on the sound habits of direct and unprejudiced observation which gave us the short poems in "Lyrical Ballads" and in the edition of 1807. It is full of youthful fervours, which not even the over-scrupulous revisions of later years could extinguish. The truly Wordsworthian philosophy still animates its reflective parts, even though half repressed in a system from which poetry instinctively withdraws. And it indicates in advance the course of Wordsworth's later sympathies. Even "The White Doe of Rylstone" and "The Excursion," which were finished seven years later, were conceived and in large part composed before the end of that fateful year 1807. Apart from a few surprises, such as "Laodamia," the muses held little in store for him except a vast number of splendid sonnets.

That beautiful poem, "The White Doe of Rylstone," has rarely been understood. It was begun in 1807, and completed and published in 1815. Based upon an ancient ballad in Percy's collection, "The Rising of the North," which commemorates the Catholic insurrection in the twelfth year of Elizabeth's reign, the period, the

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characters, and the setting are all of a kind which appealed to the romantic spirit. Feudal pride and valour, the pathos of monastic ruins, a subtle suggestion of the preternatural, and an atmosphere of moonlight—all these elements of Romanticism are present here. Never before had Wordsworth accepted so fully the complete mechanism of Romance. It might plausibly be inferred that this poem in every respect marked a fresh departure in technical method and a changed estimate of human values. But if it be studied deeply, it will reveal a meaning so intimately associated with Wordsworth's old ideals, that questions of time and circumstance, of technique, form, and fashion, fall into secondary rank. 'The White Doe of Rylstone" is essentially one more great autobiographical poem. Though ostensibly objective and historical, it is the final message of Wordsworth's personal and original religion, the parting utterance of his poetic youth. The master of Rylstone Hall, with eight of his sons, joins the great Catholic earls, Percy and Neville. Francis Norton, his other son, endeavours in vain to dissuade them from taking up arms. The young man resolves not to fight on either side, but to follow the Northern levies, alone and weaponless, in order to be of service to his kindred in the hour of disaster. To his sister Emily, a Protestant like himself, he prophesies the coming desolation, but enjoins upon her a life of strict quietude at home. She is not to take sides, even in thought:

> Farewell all wishes, all debate,
> All prayers for this cause, or for that!
> Weep, if that aid thee; but depend
> Upon no help of outward friend;
> Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave
> To fortitude without reprieve.

The father and eight warrior sons are taken and slain. Francis, after comforting them in prison and trying to save their banner, which his sister's fingers had wrought, is likewise slain. The maid is left with nothing, seemingly, to live for—an exile, a wanderer

> Driven forth like a withered leaf.

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Yet strength remained in her loneliness, a cold, high self-possession:

> Her soul doth in itself stand fast,
> Sustained by memory of the past
> And strength of Reason; held above
> The infirmities of mortal love;
> Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
> And awfully impenetrable.

Returning to her father's ruined domain, she was surprised one day by a visit from a white doe, which had once been her playmate, and henceforth, from the companionship and love of this faithful creature, she drew, even on that "trouble-haunted ground," comfort and peace:

> With her Companion, in such frame
> Of mind, to Rylstone back she came;
> And, ranging through the wasted groves,
> Received the memory of old loves,
> Undisturbed and undistrest,
> Into a soul which now was blest
> With a soft spring-day of holy,
> Mild, and grateful melancholy:
> Not sunless gloom or unenlightened,
> But by tender fancies brightened.

This is the song of one who had hoped for the success of a lost cause, and had been heartbroken over the event—of one, however, who had found balm in the quiet exercise of reason and the visitings of imagination. Perhaps it is even possible that in the character of Francis, who abstains from violence for conscience' sake, Wordsworth paid tribute to the pacific principles of his own early manhood, when, as we have seen, the wickedness of war was an oft-recurring theme in his writings. There is more than this, a sense of the futility and transitoriness of action. A note of almost oriental renunciation runs through the poem. Human endeavour, the whole fabric of human deeds, are destined to pass away and leave no trace. Only Nature and Mind and the Peace of God endure. Salvation is found not through acting, but through suffering. The utmost that can be expected is consolation for hopes deceived, and this

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consolation comes unbidden, with gentle soft approach, from inward springs. Thus comforted, but with its active instincts rebuked, the soul begins

> its reascent in sanctity,
> From fair to fairer; day by day
> A more divine and loftier way.

We think at once of the concluding lines of the tenth stanza of the " Intimations " ode, realizing, however, that the poet has meanwhile risen to thinner air and a more attenuated philosophy:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Disillusion, he seems to tell us, lurks at the end of all effort. But when the ruin is most complete, Imagination, the power by which the mind admits to itself the healing touch of nature, can half regain what was lost.

Is it not possible, too, that this mystical poem grew in part from his long brooding over the fate and office of woman? In a sense the lives of his sister and of Sara Hutchinson seemed to have been sacrificed. They could not look forward to the fulfilment of their destinies as wives and mothers. He must have known by this time (he was fully informed of the fact in 1811) that Coleridge loved Sara with hopeless and helpless adoration. For them, and indeed for Coleridge himself, no resource was left save those that comforted the meek lady in the poem, nothing but " a wise passiveness." Other meanings this wonderful poem may have, but surely it teaches that active life is vanity that passeth away, though the soul, through suffering and submission to nature, may yet win communion with what endures for ever. The essence of the whole poem lies in the lines prefixed to it, a quotation from " The Borderers ":

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Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And has the nature of infinity.
Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem
And irremovable) gracious openings lie
By which the soul—with patient steps of prayer—
May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds
Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent
Even to the fountain-head of peace divine.

Wordsworth has been so often and so justly praised as the poet of joy, that it is worth while to realize to what depths of passionate regret he himself had penetrated. If he consoles us, it is because he at times was disconsolate. If he strengthens us, it is because he realized the weakness, the pathos, of humanity. It was a point of duty with him to keep silent his fears and heart-rending cares. Now and then they break through, however, and the revelation enhances our respect for him and enlarges his authority as a teacher of wisdom.

On the other hand, " The White Doe of Rylstone," regarded in connection with the general trend of Wordsworth's thinking at the time he wrote it, is a confession of human failure so sweeping that the Western mind refuses to join in it. Behind our intellectual, no less than our material achievements, throbs the vital spark of self-trust. And to the Occidental, self is chiefly reason and will. Ascetic moods of religion come and go, and no doubt an ascetic denial of reason and of will remains as a constant element in Christianity, warning us against too complete confidence in ourselves and in our works; but on the whole we refuse to believe that there is a fundamental antagonism between faith and reason or between faith and will. Protestantism, in particular, revolts against this assumption. Wordsworth's discouragement, we feel, was deeper than the facts of life warrant. We feel that the fault must have been partly his own, that he had for some time been reading human nature too despondently, and therefore mistakenly. He had given up a hope which, after all,

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and in spite of every disappointment, makes life worth living. His confession of this loss leads us to infer that his intellectual and volitional powers had suffered a blow. Substituting the word Imagination for the word Faith, he seems to make the same retreat from rational and active existence that was recommended by St. Francis of Sales and by Pascal. If William Watson's famous lines were a complete epitaph, if

> Rest! 'twas the gift he gave; and peace! the shade
> He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun,

—if this were all, then indeed "The White Doe of Rylstone" should be accounted his final message. But there is so much more in Wordsworth than a lesson of renunciation that this poem does not fully represent him. There are lessons of confidence in humankind, of resolution, of trust in reason, of "joy in widest commonalty spread"; and these also are religious. His poetry imparts strength for combat as well as comfort to the defeated. It is loved by children, and childhood abhors the religion of despair.

If any reader of this biography be impatient at so close an attention to the meaning of one poem, ample justification may be advanced in Wordsworth's own words. "I have not," he declared to Sir George Beaumont, "written down to the level of superficial observers and unthinking minds. Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing."

Apart from "The White Doe of Rylstone," "Laodamia," a number of important prose works, and about thirty political sonnets, Wordsworth produced little in the eight years immediately following 1807 besides finishing "The Excursion." The list is not short, after all, though by no means comparable with what he had achieved in the preceding eight years, or, indeed, in the eight that followed his graduation from Cambridge. Before considering the great prose treatises of this period and "The Excursion," we must review the domestic and personal events which it included.

As we have already seen, Wordsworth, his wife and

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two children, his sister, and Sara Hutchinson, were living in the farmhouse at Coleorton, Sir George Beaumont's estate in Leicestershire, at the end of 1806. There they were joined by Coleridge and his son Hartley, a lively boy eleven years old. Coleridge had resolved to live apart from his wife, but still shrank from making the separation public, and hence final. For thus hesitating he was greatly blamed by the Wordsworths, who realized that he was only prolonging a useless struggle which would ruin his own life and bring no real good to Mrs. Coleridge and the children. He remained at Coleorton from December 21, 1806, till some time after the middle of February, when he and Hartley went to London to visit Basil Montagu. In the absence of the Beaumonts, Wordsworth superintended the laying-out of their grounds, which proved to be a very congenial task. He had considerable executive ability, which he was glad to exercise, and at this time of life felt the need of interrupting frequently the strain of composition. In the spring of 1807 he and Mrs. Wordsworth went to London. According to Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge,* they spent five or six weeks, together with Coleridge and Hartley, at Basil Montagu's house. They probably stayed for a time, also, at their brother's, the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, in Lambeth. The two-volume edition of poems was going through the press, and was published in May. Wordsworth was back at Coleorton on the 21st of that month. It is stated in the " Memoirs " that he was accompanied by Sir Walter Scott on his return. Scott was in London at the same time as Wordsworth, and going nightly into society; but of his travelling northward with Wordsworth there is no mention in Lockhart's " Life."

By July 12 Wordsworth was at Grasmere once more, having stopped for some time on his way at Halifax, in Yorkshire.† It is evident from references in a letter of Dorothy's to Mrs. Clarkson‡ that they visited Wharfedale at this time. We know this also from the Adver-

* " Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 511, note.

† " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 310. ‡ *Ibid.*, 312.

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tisement to "The White Doe of Rylstone," in which Wordsworth relates that he then visited that beautiful country for the first time, and founded his poem upon a tradition connected with Bolton Priory. His exquisite ballad, "The Force of Prayer," had the same local origin. On September 19, 1807, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Marshall: "I have been fully employed, for William and Mary spent twelve days at Ullswater of late [with the Clarksons, no doubt], and returned with Sir George and Lady Beaumont, who stayed a week at Grasmere; and two days after their departure, W. and M. set forward again upon a tour through Wastdale, Ennerdale, Whitehaven, Cockermouth, etc. We expect them home to-day." To this she added a postscript: "They returned yesterday night, were at Cockermouth, our native place, saw the terrace that you have heard me speak of many a time, with the privet hedge still full of roses as it used to be thirty years ago. Yes! I remember it for more than thirty years. If it were not for dates, and other artificial aids to memory, I should forget that I am not as young as when you were married, for I feel no bodily difference. They saw my old nurse, and my father's housekeeper, and some of our relations."* Dorothy often refers, about this time, to a Miss Priestley, who lived apparently at Bradford. She was probably a daughter of the celebrated Dr. Priestley. In a letter dated Grasmere, October 18, 1807, she writes to Mrs. Marshall: "You will be glad to hear that my health is very good at present; many people tell me how well I look. . . . William is going to Penrith next week to see Richard, who has been prevented from coming to Grasmere by a fall from his horse."*

The domestic life of the Wordsworth family was becoming rather complicated. Sara Hutchinson lived with them. There were the three children—John, born June 18, 1803; Dorothy, born August 16, 1804; and Thomas, born June 16, 1806. Coleridge and his children were always welcome. Visitors to the Lakes were beginning to seek the Wordsworths out. In a letter to

* From a letter in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

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Lady Beaumont, Dorothy says of her brother: "I cannot but admire the fortitude, and wonder at the success, with which he has laboured, in that one room, common to all the family, to all visitors, and where the children frequently play beside him."* It was indeed admirable, and how different from the conditions under which he had been accustomed to work! What a change from the quiet and freedom of the old days before his marriage! The pressure of numbers and the necessity of conforming to what seemed best for many had helped to bring about another significant surrender of independence. William and Dorothy, who appear to have gone to church very seldom, if ever, in the old days, now became more or less regular attendants. They report the change to the Beaumonts, and make some curious observations about the poor preaching they have to hear. The experience struck them with the freshness of novelty.

It is not from any letters of theirs, but from expressions to which Coleridge gave way in seasons of anguish much later, that we learn one of the most affecting secrets of all their lives—namely, that he was attached to the Wordsworth household by love for Sara Hutchinson even more than by love for William and Dorothy.†

Mrs. Wordsworth went to visit her eldest brother at Stockton-on-Tees in the autumn of 1807, and on November 30 her husband left Grasmere to join her there, travelling by way of Penrith. He came home just before Christmas. Under the shadow of a row of stacks, in a field near Stockton, he composed—at least, so he told Miss Fenwick in 1843—the earlier half of "The White Doe of Rylstone."

In November a new acquaintance had been added to the Grasmere circle. This was Thomas De Quincey, then twenty-two years old. Having read the "Lyrical Ballads" upon their first appearance, this, he declared,

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 316.

† See Mr. E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge" for letters of Coleridge to Wordsworth, May 11 and December 7, 1812; and Allsop's "Letters, Conversation, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge," for a letter from Coleridge to Allsop, October 8, 1822.

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was the greatest event in the unfolding of his own mind. He found in them " an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds, teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men." So deep did they sink into his over-sensitive soul that for several years he could not bring himself to inquire the names of their authors from persons who might easily have told him. He dreaded any contamination of the sacred subject by mere casual or unsympathetic remarks. At length, on May 31, 1803, having learned Wordsworth's name and address, he wrote him an appreciative letter, which drew from the poet a kind reply on July 29, with an invitation to visit Grasmere. This answer seems not to have reached the ardent young admirer until many months later, when the correspondence was reopened. Wordsworth made an appointment to receive him in London in April, 1807, but the plan failed. In his wonderful but extremely diffuse and ecstatic chapter on Wordsworth, in " Literary Reminiscences," De Quincey tells that he " twice undertook a long journey for the express purpose of paying his respects," " twice advanced as far as the Lake of Coniston, which is about eight miles from the church of Grasmere," but, he says, " catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faint-heartedly to Coniston, and so to Oxford, *re infectâ*. This was in 1806. And thus far, from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, I had, for nearly five years, shrunk from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven, I longed." Who has not had an experience which, though perhaps with a less notable object, resembled De Quincey's ? At length the way was opened by the ever-helpful Thomas Poole, who enters from time to time in the story of these lives like Apollo on the ringing plains of Troy, giving help in time of need. In the summer of 1807 De Quincey appeared at Nether Stowey with a letter of introduction to Poole from Cottle. His purpose was to see Coleridge, who had recently been staying there. He

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found Poole himself worth seeing, and they went together over the grounds of Alfoxden talking of Wordsworth. Coleridge he discovered in the neighbouring town of Bridgwater, standing under a gateway and gazing about him. De Quincey's picture of this scene is immortal:

"In height he might seem to be about five feet eight: (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height;) his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically call fair because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street."

Towards the end of October, Mrs. Coleridge and her children, who were at Bristol, desiring to return to Keswick, De Quincey offered to share with her the expense of a post-chaise and to accompany them to the north. He has given a vivid account of his sensations when they were descending the hill from the summit of White Moss, and came all at once, "at an abrupt turn of the road, in sight of a white cottage, with two solemn yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls." With an extremity of language which appears less violent in its context than in a quotation, he says: "Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself." Wordsworth came out to greet Mrs. Coleridge.

"I therefore," continues De Quincey, "stunned almost with the actual catastrophe so long anticipated and so long postponed, mechanically went forward into the house. A little semi-vestibule between two doors preceded the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long,

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and twelve broad; very prettily wainscotted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered, at almost every season of the year, with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jessamine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, and from the dark hue of the wainscotting, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air. However, I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room from a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsey, and advanced to me with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment, before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth."

She was fair, " of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire."

" Her words were few. In reality, she talked so little that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to say of her that she could only say ' God bless you !' Certainly her intellect was not of an active order, but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts."

De Quincey maintains stoutly that the poem, " She was a phantom of delight," was really written about her. After further details of a most ecstatic description, he continues:

" Immediately behind her moved a lady, much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could be wished, for the most effective contrast. ' Her face was of Egyptian brown '; rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed in-

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THE LIVING-ROOM IN DOVE COTTAGE

From a photograph by Walmsley

Vol. II., p. 164

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ward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children,) gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict that was sometimes distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often, or rather generally, suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility, and, perhaps, from some morbid irritability of the nerves. . . . She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually. . . . The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and not systematically built up. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart."

In so far as these portraits are the result of De Quincey's direct impressions at the moment of his first introduction to the Wordsworth family, they have very great value; but the reader will have noticed that they are in part made up of secondary opinions formed in later years. His description of Wordsworth himself is far too thin-spun to be quoted here entirely, but the main features are as follows: He was about five feet ten inches tall. His head was more impressive than even Charles Lamb's. Upon the whole, his figure was not good; his legs were " not ornamental "—whatever that may mean; his shoulders were too narrow and drooping, and " his walk had a wry and twisted appearance." He had a fine, sombre complexion, " resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk." His face, says the describer, " was certainly the noblest for intellectual effects that, in actual life, I have seen, or at least have consciously been led to notice." He mentions its amazing likeness to a portrait of Milton in Richardson the

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painter's volume of notes on "Paradise Lost." It was a long face, the brow not remarkable for height, but rather, perhaps, for breadth, the nose large and a little arched, the mouth strong, the parts about the mouth noticeably prominent, the eyes remarkable, not for size, but capable of assuming, after a long day's toil in walking, a solemn and spiritual expression. He adds that both Wordsworth and his sister aged rapidly, one cause of this being "the secret fire of a temperament too fervid. Strangers invariably supposed them fifteen to twenty years older than they were."*

Near the close of 1807 Wordsworth rented a house, known as Allan Bank, which, though it would not be finished and ready for occupancy till six months later, had the advantage of being no farther from the centre of Grasmere village than Dove Cottage itself, and was large enough to hold his family and guests. Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson† that they had engaged it with the idea that Coleridge and his two boys would come and live with them, although they were well aware of the odium they would draw upon themselves by having the children under their roof. She feared lest his irresolution would wreck the plan. Their experience with him at Coleorton had convinced her that it was not in their power to make him happy. As long as Mrs. Coleridge was not separated from him publicly he would continue to vacillate, and the peace of both households would be continually disturbed. It seems to have been expected also that the Clarksons should live with them for some time, and the uncertainty about Coleridge complicated that matter, too, though Dorothy writes: "If Coleridge makes our house only an *occasional* residence, there is no objection whatever on our side." In this same letter, which bears the date December 28, Dorothy for the first time mentions Henry Crabb Robinson, who was to become an intimate friend of herself and her brother. He was an old friend of Mrs. Clarkson, who, as Catherine Buck, had known him when he was a boy

* De Quincey, "Literary Reminiscences."

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 334.

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at Bury St. Edmunds.* She it was who helped to form the mind and heart of this generous disciple of great men. Because of her recommendation, he had, at the age of twenty, read Godwin's "Political Justice," which, he says, gave a turn to his mind, and in effect directed the whole course of his life. The reference in Dorothy Wordsworth's letter is as follows: "You will not accuse me of being selfish or vain, when I say that I should feel disposed to like your cousin Henry Robinson for his love of William's poems, if I had not before been prepossessed in his favour from your having spent so many happy hours of your youth in his society. I am not more confident of any truth than of this, that there must be something good in the heart that is much attached to my brother's poems."

Coleridge was in London giving a course of lectures at the Royal Institution, and writing for the daily Press. In a letter dated February 5, 1808, to Mrs. Clarkson at Bury St. Edmunds, Dorothy shows that she knew of his habit of taking opium:†

"I am afraid you have not seen Coleridge. Poor Coleridge! the only good news we have heard of him is that his lectures are begun. We never hear anything but indirectly, and nothing has reached us but one detail of distressing illness after another; and I fear it will never be otherwise; for, setting aside that he takes no care to guard against wet or cold, I have no doubt that he continues the practice of taking opiates as much as

* H. C. Robinson's Diary, Sadler's 3-vol. edition, I. 30. Henry Crabb Robinson was born at Bury St. Edmunds in 1775, studied in Germany, and served for some years as a foreign correspondent and editor of *The Times*. He was a Unitarian, and upheld the principles of the Revolution, though bitterly opposing the Napoleonic régime. In 1809 he began the study of law at the Middle Temple, but his chief interests were politics, literature, and the personalities of living authors. He had a remarkable gift for making the acquaintance of celebrated men, of whom he knew, among others, Goethe, and many other leaders of thought in Germany. His admiration for Wordsworth was deep and lasting. His Diary, of which only a small part has been published, furnishes many valuable details of the poet's later life. The original, in Dr. Williams's Library, London, contains many remarks about Wordsworth which have not been published.

† From the original manuscript in the British Museum.

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ever. I wish you may have seen him. You will at least be able to tell us if he was in tolerable spirits. We are all well but Mary, who is as thin as ever I saw anybody who could go through the ordinary business of life and walk about cheerfully. William has finished his poem of The White Doe of Rylston, or the Fate of the Nortons, and it will probably be sent to the press in less than a month. The length of the poem is nearly 1,700 lines, and I think it very beautiful. It is to be published in Quarto. He means to demand 100 guineas for 1,000 copies. Before he publishes it he intends to send the manuscript to Coleridge."

A little later in February came the news that he had broken down, and on the 23rd Wordsworth hastened to his side. In about a month he was reported to be much better. "He has been too much employed," wrote Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson,* "in thinking of his friends to have time to brood over his own misfortunes, and *that* I am sure is much better for him; though I believe he has a thousand times over more care and sorrow for his friends than for himself. He has been exceedingly anxious about dear Sara H. I trust more so than there was occasion; for she is at present very well."

It was in this month that the sad death of a poor farmer and his wife in Easedale, George and Sarah Green, who were lost on the fells in a snowstorm, left their large family of children to the charity of the neighbours. The Wordsworths, besides undertaking to provide for the second daughter, were active in raising money to support the others. The poet himself returned to Grasmere on April 6, his journey having been hastened by bad accounts of Sara Hutchinson's health. He had stayed part of the time at Dunmow with Lady Beaumont's mother, had heard Coleridge lecture twice, and mingled somewhat with other literary persons.

Crabb Robinson met him at Charles Lamb's at breakfast on March 15,† and went with him to call on Mrs. Clarkson, who was visiting friends not far away. He says: "Wordsworth, in my first *tête-à-tête* with him,

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 343.

† H. C. Robinson's Diary, Sadler's 3-vol. edition, I. 265.

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spoke freely and praisingly of his own poems, which I never felt to be unbecoming, but the contrary." Unfortunately, this grew into a habit with Wordsworth, and was felt to be unbecoming by many of his acquaintances. It was due in part to a disinterested attachment to the principles which his poems illustrate, and in part also to the ignorant criticism of reviewers, whom he had few opportunities to answer. But there is no denying that he showed a want of tact and a certain grand style of egoism. The fault cannot be excused on the ground of the loneliness of his life, for it cannot be said that he had ever, for any great length of time, been cut off from social intercourse with keen minds; he had known many able and witty persons. But hitherto he had seldom mingled with large groups, in which idiosyncrasies were reduced to a conventional level. He therefore talked in London just as he would have done to a single listener on Helvellyn.*

One of the few letters from Wordsworth to Coleridge that have been published† is one dated at Grasmere, April 19, 1808, from which we learn of a second visit to the Lambs. "I now come to the White Doe," he writes. "In compliance with frequent entreaties I took the MS. to the Lambs, to read it, or part of it, one evening. There unluckily I found Hazlitt and his beloved [Sarah Stoddart, a great friend of Mary Lamb]: of course, though I had the poem in my hand, I declined, nay absolutely refused, to read it; but, as they were very earnest in entreating me, I at last consented to read one book." He then gives Coleridge an exposition of

* Talfourd omitted a passage in Lamb's letter to Manning, of February 26, 1808, and, as Mr. E. V. Lucas says in Vol. I., p. 386, of his edition, "Robinson (or Robinson's editor, Dr. Sadler), in recording the event, substitutes a dash for Wordsworth's name." It is, nevertheless, quite harmless, being evidently one of Lamb's jokes, as the statement about the Mansion House is sufficient to prove. The terrible words shall in any case be duly set down here: "Wordsworth, the great poet, is coming to town; he is to have apartments in the Mansion House. He says he does not see much difficulty in writing like Shakespeare, if he had a mind to try it. It is clear that nothing is wanting but the mind. Even Coleridge a little checked at this hardihood of assertion."

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 464.

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the poem, and signs himself, with an expansiveness rare indeed in him, and which shows how much he loved his friend, "Most tenderly yours."

We catch glimpses of Wordsworth in faithful attendance on Coleridge. Lamb, in his note of invitation to Robinson, says: "I am afraid W. is so engaged with Coleridge, who is ill, we cannot have him in an evening."* And Wordsworth left Coleridge's room in the *Courier* building in the Strand at seven in the morning on the day he left London to travel homeward. Much of his time this spring was spent in writing to his rich friends in behalf of the orphan children of George and Sarah Green. We learn incidentally from one of these letters—to Wrangham—that this old friend had offered to build him a cottage, and that the offer was declined.†

In one of the last letters he wrote from the cottage that had sheltered him through the most productive years of his life—to Wrangham, June 5, 1808—Wordsworth discusses the kind of reading suited to uneducated people. He realized the immense importance of this subject, agreeing with Wrangham that books for the poor should be chiefly religious, but holding also that, since "piety and religion will be best understood by him who takes the most comprehensive view of the human mind," there should be a liberal allowance of other kinds. "I have many a time wished," he says, "that I had talents to produce songs, poems, and little histories, that might circulate among other good things in this way, supplanting partly the bad; flowers and useful herbs to take the place of weeds. Indeed, some of the poems which I have published were composed not without a hope that at some time or other they might answer this purpose."‡ This desire has been in large measure fulfilled by a host of writers, and is likely to be fulfilled more and more. It reminds one of the finest and dearest ambition of Tolstoi.

In June, 1808, the Wordsworths removed to Allan

* E. V. Lucas, "Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb," I. 388.

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 352. ‡ *Ibid.*, 363.

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Bank, half a mile away, on the other side of the vale. The house was unfinished, and workmen were still in it. Here began a far less harmonious and happy period than that which had been spent at Town-end. The building was ill constructed; it was exposed to the winds that sweep down Easedale, and the chimneys smoked abominably. Abundance of room rendered it possible to invite De Quincey, the Clarksons, and Coleridge and his children, to stay with them; and the consequences of this overindulgence in hospitality were unfavourable to work. A fourth child, Catherine, was born September 6, 1808.

Wordsworth had plucked Coleridge from the pit of horror by his presence and moral persuasion, saving his life, perhaps, and at least enabling him to fulfil his London engagements. Now he took him in, apparently with the intention of keeping him as long as he would stay. This was in September. De Quincey was at Allan Bank at the same time, torn between native delicacy on the one hand and a restless desire to satisfy his curiosity on the other. He had the instinct of a detective. The ink was never dry on his pen. He realized that posterity would treasure up every detail he might report. And no detail seemed insignificant to him, for he worshipped literary greatness. But he was restrained from too great indiscretion by his loving and gentle heart and a sense of honour. His anecdotes are frequently in bad taste, and sometimes manifestly exaggerated or distorted. His descriptions, on the other hand, appear to be accurate, and are certainly as vivid as any that were ever written. They have almost an unnatural and dreamlike precision. In August, Dorothy Wordsworth had gone to the south of England to visit the Clarksons, travelling by way of Coleorton and Cambridge, in which latter place she gazed with interest, for her brother's sake, at the gateway of St. John's, and looked at various objects which he mentions in "The Prelude." I have not been able to ascertain how long she stayed away from home. She wrote to Mrs. Marshall, December 4, 1808, from Allan Bank, telling her the

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house was "literally not habitable." The following passage of this letter contains much in little:

"At the time of the great storm, Mrs. Coleridge and her little girl were here, and Mr. Coleridge is with us constantly; so you will make out that we are a pretty large family to provide for in such a manner. Mr. Coleridge and his wife are separated; and I hope they will both be the happier for it. They are upon friendly terms, and occasionally see each other. In fact, Mrs. Coleridge was more than a week at Grasmere under the same roof with him. Coleridge intends to spend the winter with us. On this side of the paper you will find a prospectus of a work which he is going to undertake; and I have little doubt but that it will be well executed if his health does not fail him; but on that score (though he is well at present) I have many fears. My brother is deeply engaged writing a pamphlet upon the Convention of Cintra, an event which has interested him more than words can express. His first and his last thoughts are of Spain and Portugal."

To Wordsworth's pamphlet we shall turn our attention presently. Coleridge's undertaking was his periodical, *The Friend*, a venture upon which he had embarked against the advice of his well-wishers, although Wordsworth, for one, while expecting failure, was unwilling to dampen his ardour. I should think that, if Coleridge had found a good business manager, nothing would have been more suitable to the peculiarities of his genius than the opportunity for varied self-expression enjoyed by the owner and editor of a magazine. But he was unwise in his business arrangements. London or Edinburgh, or Oxford or Cambridge, might have been a good place for his undertaking; Penrith certainly was not, and at Penrith *The Friend* was to be printed. It is fair to say that difficulties of publication and distribution had more to do with its failure than any other cause. Its existence, though brief, was glorious. It was a brave effort on Coleridge's part to play the man; it drew from Poole and Montagu and Clarkson, and Stuart, the London journalist, and no one knows how many others, that kind of help which blesses those who give; it enlisted Wordsworth's anxious interest, and was kept

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going, towards the end, in large part by his contributions. Sara Hutchinson must not be forgotten; she transcribed almost every paper for the press. The first number was to have appeared January 7, 1809; it came out on June 1. The second number followed punctually on June 8, but No. 3 was seven weeks late. With many irregularities and changes of plan, the numbers continued fitfully to appear, until with No. 27, the last, on March 15, 1810, *The Friend* expired.

All this time Coleridge made his home with the Wordsworths, though often hovering between Allan Bank and Greta Hall or Penrith. His boys, Hartley and Derwent, were in school at Ambleside, but appear to have spent their vacations and Sundays at Allan Bank. Including two maids and a little girl—probably Sally Green—there were regularly thirteen in the Wordsworth household, and on Saturdays and Sundays fifteen. They kept a cow and pigs, baked all their bread at home, washed part of their clothes, and mangled and ironed the whole. These details we learn from a letter of Dorothy's to Mrs. Clarkson, December 8, 1808,* in which, after mentioning such matters almost casually, she goes on to tell of deeper troubles:

"Dear Coleridge is well and in good spirits, writing letters to all his friends and acquaintances, despatching prospectuses, and fully prepared to begin his work. Nobody, surely, but himself would have ventured to send forth this prospectus with not one essay written, no beginning made! but yet I believe it was the only way for him. I believe he could not have made the beginning unspurred by a necessity which is now created by the promises therein made. I cannot, however, be without hauntings of fear, seeing him so often obliged to lie in bed more than half of the day—often so very poorly as to be utterly unable to do anything whatever. To-day, though he came down to dinner at three perfectly well, he did not rise till near two o'clock. . . . Sara and he are sitting together in his parlour. William and Mary (alas! all involved in smoke) in William's study, where she is writing for him (he dictating)."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 388.

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The Wordsworths took a six years' lease of their old cottage, and let it, partly furnished, to De Quincey, who by this time had become devoted to them all, and especially to the children. He went to London in the spring of 1809, and while there attended to the printing of Wordsworth's great political pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra. He returned in October, but spent several weeks at Allan Bank before taking up his residence at Dove Cottage. John Wilson (Christopher North) was by this time settled near the banks of Windermere, having been attracted to the Lakes by the presence of Wordsworth there. Little Dorothy was at school this spring at Appleby, where her father visited her. It is worthy of remark that up to this time there had been, since boyhood, hardly any intercourse between William Wordsworth and his brother Christopher; Dorothy seldom mentions the latter. He was, however, becoming prominent in academic and ecclesiastical circles.

Coleridge, in the vein of scornful superiority which persons of genius sometimes indulge when they witness the prosperity of mere children of the world, wrote to Poole, January 12, 1810:*

"I put myself wholly out of the question. But let any man worthy of the name contemplate William Wordsworth; let him only read his pamphlet, assuredly the grandest politico-moral work since Milton's Defensio Pop. Anglic.; and then say that men of genius make no sacrifices in order to benefit their fellow-creatures. Richard Wordsworth the attorney is not worth less than £50,000 made in business. Christopher is Dean of Bocking (£1,300 per annum), Chaplain to the Archbishop of C., and likely to obtain the theological professorship of Cambridge (when the Bishop of Llandaff shall have made the experiment whether an avowed Socinian acted honestly in becoming and remaining a Bishop of the Church of England)."

He then makes great fun of Mrs. Christopher Wordsworth, daughter of the rich banker, Lloyd, for her sancti-

* Original in the British Museum.

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monious expressions about the " advantages of this transitory world," and descants on hypocrisy.

There is an interesting entry in Crabb Robinson's manuscript Diary, under date of April 5, 1809, which shows that the old circle of extreme radicals, the very opposite of Christopher Wordsworth, still held together. Robinson says he met " Holcroft's friends," Nicholson, Godwin, Dan Stoddart, Thelwall, and Lamb.

Sara Hutchinson, worn out with the nervous strain of compelling Coleridge to go on with his work, and agitated beyond endurance, left Allan Bank in the spring of 1810 to visit her brother, who was now farming in Wales.* With her departure the combined moral force of the rest of the family was insufficient to uphold the enslaved man; he sank into abysmal despair, silent, unconscious of the beautiful world about him, coming out of his room only at meal-time, and then creeping back to his solitude. " His whole time and thoughts," wrote poor Dorothy, " except when he is reading (and he reads a great deal) are employed in deceiving himself and seeking to deceive others."†

Is it any wonder that, apart from revising " The White Doe of Rylstone " and continuing " The Excursion," Wordsworth wrote so little poetry in all this time? Mrs. Wordsworth bore a third son, and fifth child, William, May 12, 1810. In the autumn of that year Dorothy Wordsworth visited her uncle, Canon Cookson, at Binfield, near Windsor, and saw something of the Lambs. Charles took her to see the sights of London, but an intended stay with him and his sister was put off because Mary had one of her attacks of illness.‡ She returned to Grasmere before the middle of November. Coleridge, too, had gone to London in October. His departure, and the tragic estrangement from his old friends which then began, wrought so deep a change in Wordsworth's life that we must reserve the topic for a later page, going back now to mention the prose works

* At Hindwell Farm in Radnorshire.

† " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 495.

‡ E. V. Lucas, " Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb," I. 417-425.

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into which the latter had been pouring his energy during the last three years.

Towards the end of May, 1809, Wordsworth published in London a long pamphlet or tractate. Its title is an explanation of its contents, and reads as follows: "Concerning the relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other, and to the common enemy, at this crisis; and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra; the whole brought to the test of those principles by which alone the independence and freedom of nations can be preserved or recovered." Although portions of it had been already printed in a newspaper, his intention from the beginning was to bring it out as a unit, and, notwithstanding his hope that it might influence contemporary politics, he designed it for all time. Two issues of the London *Courier*—in December, 1808, and January, 1809—contained the only parts which were printed in time to have any effect upon the question at issue. The plan of continuing the work in this way was frustrated by the remoteness of Grasmere. Documents arrived there late, and business arrangements were hard to make at such a distance. De Quincey, who was in London, kindly undertook to attend to the proof-reading. But he had a peculiar and absurd system of punctuation, which annoyed the printers and caused delay; so that when the pamphlet appeared the crisis which occasioned it was past. But the principles involved are more lasting. The work is important as a definite exposition of Wordsworth's political philosophy sixteen years after his Letter to Bishop Watson, and as the last great example of a Miltonic tract.

The conquests of Napoleon in Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy, had been made against governments. His projects in the Iberian peninsula were resisted by the Spanish and Portuguese peoples. It was plain in this case that he was the enemy of liberty. When the British cabinet sent an army, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, to oppose the French in Portugal, the most ardent advocates of democratic and anti-military principles in England were, with few exceptions, as enthusi-

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astic as any others in support of the movement. In August, 1808, Wellesley defeated Junot at Vimiero, but was immediately superseded by Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, who signed a convention or military treaty at Cintra, according to which the French army was allowed to return to France with its arms and booty. They had lost a great chance to free both Portugal and Spain and to cripple Napoleon. The news was received in England with indignation, but the government stupidly endeavoured to stifle the voice of the people. Wordsworth believed he was running some risk in denouncing the actions of generals and cabinet ministers. Men had been thrown into prison and heavily fined for milder language than he used. But it is doubtful whether any of his remarks were really libellous. Bitter as was his disapproval of what had happened, he kept the controversy, as far as possible, on a high level. He had possessed himself of all the facts he could collect, and entered into the closest details, showing remarkable knowledge and forensic power; yet his constant effort was to apply principles of eternal verity.

His style is as heroic as his theme. It has a volume and weight unequalled even by Burke, and matched only by Milton. Every sentence is like a gun of huge calibre. The detonation stuns and bewilders. One loses sight of the object in the smoke that follows each discharge. For immediate effect this artillery is far too great, and it is no wonder that a small edition of 500 copies failed to sell. But a reader who has intellect enough to understand these tremendous volleys and candour enough to admit his own deficiency will be slow to hold Wordsworth responsible for the failure. If we had heroic minds, this would be the language in which to address them. A student of rhetoric or of logic will find here a noble example, in the grand style, of both arts. They have been used in this pamphlet as the instruments of a passion that without them would have destroyed the mind in which it raged.

The toil Wordsworth bestowed on his treatise exhausted and broke him. So anxious was he about

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public affairs that during the expedition to Portugal he often walked in the dead of night to the top of Dunmail Raise to anticipate the post and get the newspapers. His letters that autumn and winter are full of the subject. He shared the feeling of panic which again and again swept, and still sometimes sweeps, through the English people. His meditative and secluded life made him peculiarly susceptible to this infection. A little recklessness would have done him no harm. A collateral effect of such panics is to diminish men's interest in domestic reforms, and to elevate conservatism into a religion.

In the beginning of his treatise Wordsworth takes pains to show that he and others who felt as he did were not inconsistent in approving of the war:

"This just and necessary war, as we have been accustomed to hear it styled from the beginning of the contest in the year 1793, had, some time before the Treaty of Amiens, viz., after the subjugation of Switzerland, and not till then, begun to be regarded by the body of the people as indeed both just and necessary; and this justice and necessity were by none more clearly perceived or more feelingly bewailed than by those who had most eagerly opposed the war in its commencement, and who continued most bitterly to regret that this nation had ever borne a part in it. Their conduct was herein consistent: they proved that they kept their eyes steadily fixed upon principles; for though there was a shifting or transfer of hostility in their minds as far as regarded persons, they only combated the same enemy opposed to them under a different shape; and that enemy was the spirit of selfish tyranny and lawless ambition."

He taxes the British leaders with "an utter want of *intellectual* courage—of that higher quality which is never found without one or other of the three accompaniments, talents, genius, or principle." And of this last he eloquently says: "I mean that fixed and habitual principle which implies the absence of all selfish anticipations, whether of hope or fear, and the inward disavowal of any tribunal higher and more

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dreaded than the mind's own judgment upon its own act."

For a " recluse," as Wordsworth is sometimes called, the following observation seems to show a miraculous knowledge of human nature:

" Practical statesmen assume too much credit to themselves for their ability to see into the motives and manage the selfish passions of their immediate agents and dependents, and for the skill with which they baffle or resist the aims of their opponents. A promptness in looking through the most superficial part of the characters of those men who, by the very circumstance of their contending ambitiously for the rewards and honours of government, are separated from the mass of the society to which they belong, is mistaken for a knowledge of humankind. Hence, where higher knowledge is a prime requisite, they not only are unfurnished, but, being unconscious that they are so, they look down contemptuously upon those who endeavour to supply (in some degree) their want. Hence, where higher knowledge is a prime requisite, they not only are unfurnished, but, being unconscious that they are so, they look down contemptuously upon those who endeavour to supply (in some degree) their want."

We are reminded of the self-complacent attendants of political machines in our time, their narrowness of view, their cynicism, their contempt for persons who are frank enough not to deny their own honesty and good intentions. Such politicians, Wordsworth says, cannot understand

" the instincts of natural and social man, the deeper emotions, the simpler feelings, the spacious range of the disinterested imagination, the pride in country for country's sake, when to serve has not been a formal profession and the mind is therefore left in a state of dignity only to be surpassed by having served nobly and generously, the instantaneous accomplishment in which they start up who, upon a searching call, stir for the Land which they love, not from personal motives, but for a reward which is undefined and cannot be missed; the solemn fraternity which a great Nation composes, gathered together, in a stormy season, under the shade of ancestral feeling."

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We hear an echo of his defeated hopes when he declares " it is from the blindness and insensibility of these and the train whom they draw along with them, that the throes of nations have been so ill-recompensed by the births which have followed, and that revolutions, after passing from crime to crime and from sorrow to sorrow, have often ended in throwing back such heavy reproaches of delusiveness upon their first promises." He abates not a jot of his faith in the justice of the cause on behalf of which he wrote the Letter to Bishop Watson, for he says: " In the course of the last thirty years we have seen two wars waged against Liberty—the American war, and the war against the French People in the early stages of their Revolution." And, again, looking forward with a far-seeing eye, he shows that distrust of industrialism which was to be one of the dominant instincts of his later life. Referring to Spain, he says: " Manufactures and commerce have there in far less degree than elsewhere, by unnaturally clustering the people together, enfeebled their bodies, inflamed their passions by intemperance, vitiated from childhood their moral affections, and destroyed their imaginations." We have seen that his opinions, as revealed in 1793, were largely formed upon those of Rousseau. That he had since then repudiated his master, though still clinging to much of the master's teaching, is evident from his epigram that " the paradoxical reveries of Rousseau and the flippancies of Voltaire are plants which will not naturalize in the country of Calderon and Cervantes." Finally, taking his stand upon the essential goodness of mankind, " the dignity and intensity of human desires," and the divine correspondence of nature with all that tends to uplift the race, he sounds a ringing call to face the future: " Here, then, they with whom I *hope* take their stand. There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise of all ages. We would not be rejected from this community: and therefore do we hope. We look forward with erect mind, thinking and feeling: it is an obligation of duty: take

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away the sense of it, and the moral being would die within us."*

It is unfortunate that the highly elaborate style of Wordsworth's tract has kept it hitherto, and probably will always keep it, from being much read. To follow his long and intricate sentences demands and rewards considerable intellectual effort. They not seldom run for a whole page, carrying an immense and varied load of facts, images, reflections, and appeals to feeling. Except for the exhaustive display of proofs and the unsparing use of logical argument, the matter of this entire pamphlet is such as might have been wrought into one of those rare poems, of which Lucretius's "De Rerum Naturâ" and Milton's "Paradise Regained" are perhaps the most signal examples, poems in which philosophy is bolder than her wont, because she masks herself in verse.

There is no better illustration of Wordsworth's practical wisdom than a letter of his to a friend who had consulted him about the education of a gifted daughter. The letter is preserved in Bishop Wordsworth's "Memoirs," Vol. II., p. 167, where it is conjecturally dated 1806. The poet apparently had in mind some of the traits which distinguished his own sister, her ardent sensibility, her impetuosity, her eagerness to love and be loved. He had seen how the dangers inherent in such a character were averted, or partially averted, by the cultivation of unselfish and impersonal interests and the acquisition of wide knowledge. Perhaps he had already observed that not even the favourable conditions of her life had saved her from the ravages of feelings too intense. His friend's child was gifted with quickness and talent.

"Such a child," Wordsworth writes, "will always be too much noticed. . . . Formerly, indeed until within these few years, children were very carelessly brought up; at present they too early and too habitually feel

* As expressed in "The Prelude," XI. 393.

There is
One great society alone on earth,
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

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their own importance, from the solicitude and unremitting attendance which is bestowed upon them. A child like yours, I believe, unless under the wisest guidance, would prosper most where she was the least noticed and the least made of; I mean more than this, where she received the least cultivation. She does not stand in need of the stimulus of praise; . . . take all the pains you can, she will be too much noticed." He apprehends for her " an undue predominance of present objects over absent ones, which, as she will surely be distinguished by an extreme love of those about her, will produce a certain restlessness of mind, calling perpetually for proofs of ever-living regard and affection; she must be loved as much and in the same way as she loves, or she will not be satisfied. . . . She will (all which is referable to the same cause) in the company of others have too constant a craving for sympathy up to a height beyond what her companions are capable of bestowing; this will often be mortifying to herself, and burthensome to others; and should circumstances be untoward, and her mind be not sufficiently furnished with ideas and knowledge, this craving would be most pernicious to herself, preying upon mind and body. She will be too easily pleased, apt to overrate the merits of new acquaintances, subject to fits of over-love and over-joy, in absence from those she loves full of fears and apprehensions, etc., injurious to her health; her passions for the most part will be happy and good, but she will be too little mistress of them. The distinctions which her intellect will make will be apt, able, and just, but in conversation she will be prone to over-shoot herself, and commit eloquent blunders through eagerness. In fine, her manners will be frank and ardent, but they will want dignity; and a want of dignity will be the general defect of her character."

As a cure for the evils to which a person of this kind is liable—a refined selfishness and a deforming self-consciousness—he recommends

" putting her in the way of acquiring without measure or limit such knowledge as will lead her out of herself, such knowledge as is interesting for its own sake; things known because they are interesting, not interesting because they are known; in a word, by leaving her at liberty to luxuriate in such feelings and images as will feed her mind in silent pleasures."

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Similar views are expressed in "The Prelude." They are familiar to readers of Rousseau's "Émile." One is uncertain which is the more general to-day—their theoretical acceptance or their practical neglect.

It must have been a great relief to Coleridge, when his interest in *The Friend* was ebbing, to receive a contribution, in the shape of a letter from John Wilson (Christopher North), in time for the seventeenth number, a letter which distinctly called for a reply from Wordsworth. Here were two numbers almost thrust into his hand! Wilson's letter, which was signed "Mathetes," was published in the middle of December, 1809. Wordsworth's answer, over the signature "M. M.," was begun in the same number, and continued in the twentieth. Wilson had been living near Windermere for more than a year, and had met Wordsworth several months before writing to *The Friend;* yet his idolatry had survived the test of propinquity. He had even caught his master's dignified and solemn style. If it were not that the letter mentions Wordsworth by name, in terms of lofty praise, one might infer, from the number of ideas characteristic of him which it contains, and from the very texture of its language, that he was himself its author. Except for the personal reference, which might indeed have been inserted by Coleridge without Wordsworth's knowledge, there would have been no indelicacy in the latter's having clothed in his own style an inquiry addressed to him in less extraordinary style by his young admirer. At all events, the appeal is as Wordsworthian as the response, and suffers nothing in comparison.

The subject was one congenial to the poet. The exposition of it was according to his accustomed method of analysis. The diction and the long musical roll of the phrases recall him constantly to mind. After a short introduction Wilson begins his inquiry thus: "I speak, Sir, of those who, though bred up under our unfavourable system of education, have yet held at times some intercourse with nature and with those great minds whose works have been moulded by the spirit of nature; who, therefore, when they pass from the seclusion and con-

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straint of early study, bring with them into the new scene of the world much of the pure sensibility which is the spring of all that is greatly good in thought and action." They must trust to the chances of the world for a guide. "And such is our present moral and intellectual state, that these chances are little else than variety of danger. There will be a thousand causes conspiring to complete the work of a false education, and, by enclosing the mind on every side from the influences of natural feeling, to degrade its inborn dignity, and finally bring the heart itself under subjection to a corrupted understanding." Wilson holds that the present age is degenerate; even in its excellence there is the beginning of danger, "for it is the first spring of that excessive admiration of the age which at last brings down to its own level a mind born above it." A young man of generous disposition, perceiving with gratified surprise that his own times have titles to admiration as well as those ancient times upon which his education fastened his gaze, will experience a powerful reaction. He will feel that his teachers have insulted the age and himself. As he trusts that the future shall transcend the present, so he believes that the present transcends the past. He looks condescendingly upon the achievements of bygone ages, and is dazzled by the lustre of the age in which he lives, giving "all his love and reverence and zeal to productions of art, to theories of science, to opinions, to systems of feeling, and to characters distinguished in the world, that are far beneath his own original dignity."

His own original dignity—how like Wordsworth that sounds! And how strangely like his own questionings, as we may read them now in "The Prelude" and "The Excursion," are these misgivings, this perception, and yet this distrust of modern progress, this desire to separate the temporary from the eternal, this return to what was best in antiquity and in long-established institutions! Wilson finds an honourable cause, but an evil tendency, in the temptation which a young man feels to defer to the authority of his contemporaries, "a

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sympathy pleading importunately at his heart to descend to the fellowship of his brothers, and to take their faith and wisdom for his own." He laments the effect of this deference upon conversation, in excluding " all which is drawn from the depth of nature, all which impassioned feeling has made original in thought "; and eloquently protests that, " whatever be the native spirit of a mind, it is evident that this perpetual adaptation of itself to others, this watchfulness against its own rising feelings, this studied sympathy with mediocrity, must pollute and impoverish the sources of its strength." Finally, conscious of the need, for himself and others, of a great living teacher who shall lift their souls above these degrading influences without severing their affections for their fellow-men, he exclaims: " Even now, there are many to whom the name of Wordsworth calls up the recollection of their weakness and the consciousness of their strength," urging the poet to exert his influence " in a work adapted by its mode of publication to address the feelings of the time, and to bring to its readers repeated admonition and repeated consolation." I can imagine no other meaning for this than that Wilson desired Wordsworth to take over and continue *The Friend* as a mouthpiece of oracular wisdom.

The poet's reply to his disciple shows, in its general drift, and especially in a few outstanding and cardinal sentences, that the disintegration which had worked havoc with his political views had not yet reached the central doctrines of his philosophy. These doctrines, as we have seen again and again, asserted the sacredness of childhood, the vitalizing power of nature, the authority of reason, and the value of joy as an index of moral health. They were Wordsworth's personal formulation of the great ideas in which the most original thought of the eighteenth century culminated. They were Rousseau plus Godwin plus Wordsworth. It cannot be too often pointed out that what caused the abandonment of the philosophy of Enlightenment, in Wordsworth as in many of his contemporaries, was not dissatisfaction with its principles abstractly considered, but

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the seeming logic of events and the force of vulgar opinion. The reaction was political, not to say physical. A favourable turn of politics—for instance, the death of Napoleon and the return to power of a sane democracy in France—would at this point still have saved Wordsworth from the abyss of despondency and distrust into which he was falling. He gently remonstrates with Wilson for doing injustice to the present by comparing it with the past. The present is at most fifty years; we see the many achievements of the past foreshortened through fifty centuries. A young man will, of course, be deceived who expects to find complete moral support in the feelings of his own time merely. However, "the evil under which he labours is not a superabundance of the instincts and the animating spirit of that age, but a falling short or a failure. But what can be gained from this admonition? . . . Granted that the sacred light of childhood is and must be for him no more than a remembrance. He may, notwithstanding, be remanded to nature, and with trustworthy hopes, founded less upon his sentient than upon his intellectual being; to nature, as leading on insensibly to the society of reason, but to reason and will as leading back to the wisdom of nature. A reunion, in this order accomplished, will bring reformation and timely support; and the two powers of reason and nature, thus reciprocally teacher and taught, may advance together in a track to which there is no limit." And then, in a phrase which could have no other author than himself, he adds: "We have been treating of nature as a teacher of truth through joy and through gladness, and as a creatress of the faculties by a process of smoothness and delight." In manhood, however, we apply "for the succour which we need to a faculty that works after a different course; that faculty is reason; she gives more spontaneously, but she seeks for more; she works by thought through feeling; yet in thoughts she begins and ends."

One cannot help surmising that a brave adherence to these principles for a few more years, by men of imagination in England, France, and Germany, would have

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brought them through the period of so-called Romanticism unweakened by false sentiment, safe from reaction, and better prepared to co-operate with the patient and fortunately unmoved heroes of modern science. The age would perhaps then not have been misled by the false mediævalism of Chateaubriand and Hugo; the absurd untimeliness of the tractarian movement would have been sooner perceived; Carlyle might have spared his futile ravings against reason and knowledge and invention and improvement.

It appears likely that Wordsworth was preparing to take over, in large part at least, the task of filling the pages of *The Friend*. The twenty-fifth number, published February 22, 1810, contained a long essay by him, "Upon Epitaphs," and when the periodical came to an untimely end, he had in manuscript two other dissertations on the same, rather appropriate, subject. Dignified and thoughtful though they all are, these dissertations were singularly unfitted to keep a magazine alive. They have much permanent worth, and it was well that a subject which by some persons of grotesque bad taste has been used for a jest should have its real compass sounded. Yet so heavy a theme has often drawn forth an excusable lightness, as if to render it tolerable, and no one resents the tender and compassionate playfulness of Sir Thomas Browne or Charles Lamb or Washington Irving when they meditate on graves. There is none of this in Wordsworth. Nor does he rise to the austere simplicity of the ancients. The sepulchral inscriptions of the early Christians were simple, too, because they turned the mind wholly in one direction—towards the future—disregarding the human qualities and mundane actions of the deceased. The fault of nearly all elaborate epitaphs composed since the Middle Ages is that they attempt to combine three kinds of expression—Christian hope, stoic resignation, and human pride in earthly achievement. Wordsworth fails to note this fault, and therefore does not sufficiently guard against it. As these compositions are his only regular essays, in the old-fashioned sense of the word,

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he is brought into comparison by them with such masters as Bacon, Cowley, Johnson, Addison, Irving, and Lamb. It will, I think, be generally allowed, by competent judges, that he speaks with as much authority as any of them. The reader feels that a full mass of knowledge, cemented by reflection, supports even the most casual remark. But wit, which even on such a subject is never out of place, is absent from Wordsworth's pages, nor are they softened by the charm which humility and gentleness and a pervading acknowledgment of fellow-sinfulness give to every line of Charles Lamb and to the best passages of Coleridge. Wordsworth's manner is as magisterial as Dr. Johnson's. He is more dogmatic than Bacon, without the excuse of having a sententious style. A certain haughtiness is perceptible even in so short a space and on so elevated a theme as death and immortality. Wordsworth here, as in almost all his prose writings and recorded conversations, keeps his eye on possible rivals or opponents. When he refers to them his tone is slightly bitter. If he so often protested against the use of emulation in schools as tending to create envy, it was because he had felt the gnawing of this canker in his own heart. An instance of this is given in Mrs. Davy's manuscript, already quoted. Writing of a call she made on the poet on his birthday, in 1846, she says:

"He had written very lately to his nephew Charles, remarking on a sermon of his, preached as a farewell to his Winchester pupils, speaking of emulation as a help to school progress. Mr. W. thinks that envy is likely to go along with this, and therefore would hold it to be unsafe. 'In my own case,' he said, 'I never felt emulation with another man but once, and that was accompanied by envy. It's a horrid feeling. This was in the study of Italian, which I entered on at college along with ——. I never engaged in the proper studies of the University, so that I had no temptation in these to envy anyone, but I remember with pain that I had envious feelings when my fellow-student in Italian got before me. I was his superior in many mental departments, but he was the better Italian scholar, and I envied him. The annoyance this gave me made me feel that emulation

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was not for me, and it made me very thankful that as a boy I never experienced it.' In the course of the conversation, Mr. W. said, smiling, 'One other time in my life I felt envy. It was when my brother was nearly certain of success in a foot-race with me. I tripped up his heels. This must have been envy.' 'It was worse,' quoth Mrs. Wordsworth, 'it was malice. Oh, William, very bad indeed!'"

The essays are well worth reading as examples of the power of a great intellect, moved by a fine conscience, to discriminate between true and false taste, to select the important and reject the trivial aspects of a common practice, and to lift into proper prominence a subject which to ordinary minds had seemed too small for particular notice.* There is one word of peculiar biographical significance in the essay which appeared in *The Friend*. This tell-tale word is "revelation," meaning the teachings of the Bible. It marks a distinct stage in Wordsworth's movement towards conformity in religion. He was now nearly forty years old, and one of the most remarkable things about his correspondence and his sister's had until lately been the infrequent use of the ordinary terms of Christian piety, at that time extremely abundant in the letters of most religious people in England, Scotland, and America.

Late in the autumn of 1809 Wordsworth wrote an anonymous introduction to a volume of drawings entitled "Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire," by the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson. The book was published early the next year. This introduction he reprinted, with some alterations, in 1820, with his sonnets on the River Duddon and other poems, and independently in 1822 as "A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England." This he called the third edition of the treatise. It contained much additional matter. In 1823 a fourth and revised edition appeared, and in 1835 a fifth, with further fresh matter. This, the final text, was entitled "A Guide

* All three are to be found in Vol. II. of Grosart's edition of Wordsworth's Prose Works.

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through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a Description of the Scenery, etc., for the Use of Tourists and Residents."*

Wordsworth's book is, as might have been expected, much more than a guide. It is an application of his moral philosophy, and of the principles of æsthetics deducible from them, to a particular object. This object, while unusually well defined by geographical boundaries, is in itself very complex, like almost everything else in nature. He begins by making a scientific survey, which at once simplifies the process of analysis. The varied beauty of the Lake country depends ultimately on certain geological facts. These Wordsworth brings to our attention in a short and striking passage. Then he considers the climate, which is in this case the cause both of loveliness and of much annoyance. The effects of man's residence in the district are then traced to their historical causes. All this is done with perfect competence, and as briefly as possible. He avoids all excess, and never descends to the trivial. His distaste for sentimentality is nowhere more plainly shown. The subject was full of temptation to be both trivial and sentimental. He does, however, fall into an error to which he is becoming more and more liable—the error of denouncing, without making any allowances, what he conceives to be the mistakes of other people. One would suppose, for example, that to plant a larch anywhere between Carlisle and Kendal was an offence past forgiveness. He is quite ready, also, to find fault with nature herself. His attempt to glorify the English lakes at the expense of those of Scotland and Switzerland is an instance of obstinate provincialism. In short, this treatise, though bearing witness to Wordsworth's hard-grained intelligence and his eminent powers of scientific observation and analysis, betrays a defect which is henceforth to become more and more apparent in his life—namely, a settled obstinacy of view and an over-

* This has been admirably edited, with a good introduction and notes, by Professor Ernest de Sélincourt, in a little volume published by Henry Frowde, London, 1906.

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weening self-confidence. Human nature is such that we tolerate dogmatism less easily in one who is generally correct than in a fellow-mortal who makes many mistakes. However, it must be admitted that Wordsworth is an authority on topography. Architects, landscape-gardeners, and foresters, in all parts of the world, will find his remarks valuable. As an example of the application of æsthetic principles, the Guide to the Lakes merits a place not too far below Lessing's "Laocoon."

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CHAPTER XXV

LOSSES AND FEARS

We have seen that by the autumn of 1810 Coleridge had sickened of *The Friend*, and was living at Allan Bank as an invalid and dependent. His friends nursed him, humoured him, tried to animate his flagging will. Their patience was inexhaustible, their love unfailing. They knew that, however great their own inconvenience was, it could not be compared with his remorse. He was racked with physical pain, which opium could no longer dull, and plunged in mental torpors which alcohol could no longer dispel. In a busy household including several young children, his irregular and selfish habits must have been little less than intolerable. Yet they were tolerated to the end. But late in October Basil Montagu, with Mrs. Montagu and their daughter, passed through Grasmere on their way from Scotland to London, and Coleridge made arrangements to travel with them. Montagu was an impulsive man, with plenty of means. He invited his old friend to live with him in his town-house, and Coleridge, fired with fresh hope and ambition, gladly accepted. Wordsworth, thinking it unfair not to warn Montagu, told him plainly that Coleridge's habits would make him a troublesome guest. As J. Dykes Campbell suggests,* this was done in Coleridge's interest as well as Montagu's. A quarrel with Montagu, which was sure to occur if they tried to live together, would have deprived Coleridge of one of his most useful friends. Apparently the advice was disregarded at first, and only acted upon when it was seen to be well founded; for it was at Montagu's house, a few days after their arrival,

* "Life of Coleridge," p. 179.

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that poor Coleridge was blunderingly told that Wordsworth had predicted a failure of the plan. Montagu, who was not a prudent and exact talker, spoke in a moment of exasperation. He probably exaggerated what Wordsworth had said, and in such a case the manner is quite as important as the matter. One can imagine the painful effort Wordsworth must have made to express his scruples, and how delicately worded they must have been. As they came to Coleridge's ears they were harsh and unfriendly. He conceived the monstrous idea that Wordsworth had commissioned Montagu to tell him that he had been an absolute nuisance in the former's family, and that he, Wordsworth, had lost all hope of him.* Our information of what Coleridge thought he heard and how he felt is derived chiefly from his heart-breaking letters written eighteen months later, when reconciliation was in progress. Although he professed that he never liked or respected Montagu, and had no intention of staying in his house, yet he believed his report, adding interpretations which became part of the text, and telling Mary Lamb, with a flood of tears, that Wordsworth had given him up. He was at this juncture taken in by his kind friends, the Morgans, under whose roof a new chapter in his life began. And that old chapter, of a noble friendship, of a community of genius, of generous admiration, of faithful sacrifice, could never be opened again.

Coleridge suffered acutely, the more so as, through his own indiscretion, the story got abroad, to the discredit of all concerned. Wordsworth, for some time ignorant of what had happened, could only wonder why Coleridge never wrote. News came at last through Mrs. Coleridge. The whole circle, from Southey at Keswick to kind Thomas Poole at Nether Stowey, were rendered miserable. The Lambs, hearing only one side, were partially estranged from the Wordsworths. Coleridge's sons, Hartley and Derwent, who had seen their father happy, for him, at Grasmere, grieved at the change which they could not understand. "It would pity anybody's

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 590.

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heart," wrote Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, "to look at Hartley, when he inquires (as if hopelessly) if there has been any news of his father."*

In the spring of 1811 the Wordsworths moved into the Rectory, opposite the church in Grasmere village, and we learn from a letter of Dorothy's, dated June 16, 1811, that the Coleridge boys had, up to that time, been spending two days a week with them as before, though now it would be necessary to curtail these visits. It is pathetic to observe that William and Dorothy read *The Courier* newspaper, picking out articles and poems which they recognized as having been written by their old friend. How far he had fallen in their respect is shown by the following passage in Dorothy's letter to Mrs. Clarkson, just quoted:

"I am sorry to say (I would not say it but to you) that poor Coleridge's late writings in *The Courier* have in general evinced the same sad weakness of moral constitution to which you alluded in your last letter, as tainting his intercourse with his private friends, and his casual acquaintances also. They are as much the work of a party-spirit as if he were writing for a place—servile adulations of the Wellesleys."

The picture that Henry Crabb Robinson, in his Diary, paints of Coleridge in London is not at all melancholy. Robinson saw him for the first time in private, at Charles Lamb's, on November 14, 1810. The pleasure was repeated the next evening, Morgan, among others, being present. Coleridge was very "eloquent," and spoke of Wordsworth "with great warmth of praise, but objected to some of his poems." "Wishing to avoid an undue regard to the high and genteel in society, Wordsworth had unreasonably attached himself to the low, so that he himself erred at last." It is strange that Coleridge could talk so freely about Wordsworth if the mere thought of him occasioned anguish. Perhaps what he thought Montagu reported Wordsworth to have said had not yet reached full dimensions in his mind. There was doubtless some original offence, but we may be sure

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 514.

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it grew when brooded over. We learn later from Robinson that Coleridge at this time was " quite well." Yet all accounts of him founded on his own letters to Mrs. Coleridge are full of complaints of ill health and the imminent prospect of death. He must have been in a state of mental excitement unusual even with him. As we see him in Robinson's Diary, he is renewing his relations with Godwin, in whom he finds " more, after all, than he was once willing to admit." In theological discussion, or rather monologue, he makes very free concessions to sceptical criticism. Yet at this period his writings and lectures were gaining favour in clerical circles, and he was beginning to build up his great reputation as a defender of a mystical kind of orthodoxy! His opinion in private, as Robinson took it down, has a familiar sound at this late day. It is curious, though not surprising, to find two of the most cherished conceptions of pragmatism anticipated by Coleridge. Robinson states that he " declared it to be not advisable to ground the belief in Christianity on historical evidence "; and also that " he went so far as to affirm that religious belief is an act, not of the understanding, but of the will."* If philosophical ideas ever had discoverable beginnings, here, we might say, was the foundation, in English thought, of that house of refuge to which so many souls have flocked who deem instinct and practical " workability " safer guides than understanding.

The following extracts, hitherto unprinted, from Crabb Robinson's Diary for January-July, 1811, show the effect of Wordsworth's frankness on Coleridge and his friends:

" *Jan.* 8.—We spoke of Wordsworth and Coleridge. C. L., to my surprise, asserted C. to be the greater man. He preferred the Mariner to anything W. had written."

" *Mar.* 13.—C. spoke of himself. He alluded to suffering endured *from* the North and to his difficulties in publishing the Friend."

" *Mar.* 21.—Mrs. Davy spoke with contempt of Wordsworth."

* H. C. Robinson's Diary, December 20, 1810.

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"*Mar.* 30.—C. [Coleridge] spoke with severity of those who were once the extravagant admirers of G. [Godwin], and afterwards, when his fame declined, became his most angry opponents. He spoke of Tobin as one of these. Montagu he also referred to as a former admirer of G. I noticed the infinite superiority of G. over the French writers in moral tendency and feeling. I had learned to hate Helvétius and Mirabeau, and retained my love for G. This was agreed to as a just sentiment by C., etc. C. said there was more in G. after all than he was once willing to admit, though not so much as his enthusiasts fancied. He had declaimed against G. openly, but visited him notwithstanding he could not approve even of Wordsworth's feelings and language respecting G. Southey's severity he attributed to the habit of reviewing."

On May 24 or 25 he mentions dining with Thelwall. Nicholson—doubtless the man with whom Wordsworth was intimate seventeen or eighteen years before—was present, and is pronounced to be a very superior man. Robinson also refers to "the Conversation Society which met in St. Crispin-st. 14 or 15 years ago" (probably the club which Wordsworth mentioned in his letter to William Mathews of March 21, 1796), and says that out of this sprung a society which published *The Free-Thinking Christian Magazine*.

"*July* 21.—L. [Lamb] intimated that W. had lately treated C. with great unkindness, and made him quite wretched. He had warned Mont. [Montagu] not to take him into his house. This had afflicted C., and W. had not taken any notice of it, though he knew how much he had been affected by the circumstance. I also learned that there has for a long time been but a slight acquaintance between W. and S. [Southey]."

"*July* 24.—S. spoke of W. in a way that convinced me there is no great attachment between them. W., he says, has the fault of over-rating his works. He has by him poems that would be universally admired, but he has a miserly feeling concerning them, as if by being published they would cease to be his own. He thinks the very worst of his works good enough to be published. S. would not write a review of his pamphlet because he knew W. would not be satisfied with the

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praise he should give it. I should add that S. spoke enthusiastically of the pamphlet and of W.'s genius, and said the fault of attaching too much importance to his own writings is his only one. . . . C. and S. spoke of Thelwall, calling him merely John."

About August 1, 1811, Wordsworth, his wife, and their younger children, Thomas and Catherine, who were recovering from whooping-cough, went to the seaside, first near Duddon Bridge, and then at Bootle. The journey was described in verses entitled "Epistle to Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart., from the South-west Coast of Cumberland." This effusion, Wordsworth told Miss Fenwick, was never seen by the person to whom it was addressed. In 1842 it was printed, for the sake of gain, as its author admitted. It falls below mediocrity, and is the first downright poor piece encountered by one who reads his collected works in chronological order. There is a fine propriety in the fact that this, like other uninspired productions of his later life, is in the Popeian couplet, and has many of the pompous little affectations which Wordsworth's own precepts and poems had already taught the world to find ridiculous. Every piece of prose or verse which we owe to his friendship with Sir George Beaumont is more or less forced, more or less inflated. This is the only long set of verses which Wordsworth composed in 1811. Besides it we have only three political sonnets, another on a painting by Sir George, another "To the Poet, John Dyer," and a few lines, of much better quality than any of these, on his little daughter Catherine, three years old.

Sainte-Beuve has somewhere remarked that courage and creative energy often desert their possessors in the most unexpected manner, at the age of forty, and that it is well, at that point, to strengthen the heart and rededicate the powers. Wordsworth had evidently come to the fatal year. He had come to it and passed it, with no quickening of soul, no renewal of youth, no broadening of sympathies, no acquisition of fresh intellectual interests.

The next two years were even more barren, each

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yielding but three pieces of verse, none of them remarkable, and one in its opening lines almost ludicrous in its contrast to Wordsworth's own theory and best practice. It is as if he wished to throw away his hard-earned gains. The lines begin:

> Mark how the feathered tenants of the flood,
> With grace of motion that might scarcely seem
> Inferior to angelical, prolong
> Their curious pastime!

"Feathered tenants of the flood" is as strong an example of artificial poetic diction as can be found anywhere between Dryden and Gray. And we may be sure that Wordsworth, ten years before, would have asked how a poet, by keeping his eye on the object, could form any idea of the motion of angels. We have another member of this imaginary order in the lines on a "View from the Top of Black Comb." It may be said of these beings that in poetry "their date is out."

There is nothing in Wordsworth's correspondence to indicate that he was aware of the presence of Percy Bysshe Shelley, at Keswick. Yet for three months,—November, 1811, to February, 1812—the shores of Derwent Water resounded to the high voice of the poet who next to Wordsworth himself justifies Keats's line, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning." After his expulsion from Oxford, his flight with Harriet Westbrook, and their marriage in Edinburgh, it was at Keswick that the young poet found one of those "green isles" of happiness which he afterward recalled in the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills." With the young couple came Harriet's sister, Eliza. They rented a cottage, and made considerable stir in the village. The Duke of Norfolk entertained the Shelleys and Miss Westbrook for a week at Greystoke, and there, early in December, Wordsworth's old friend, William Calvert, was smitten with admiration for the wonderful youth. A little later, at Calvert's house, Southey, too, made his acquaintance, and promptly gave him neighbourly aid, besides undertaking to convert him from "atheism"

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by lending him Bishop Berkeley's works, and venturing to argue with him in metaphysics. It is very unlikely that some news of this glorious stranger did not reach Grasmere, but we may be sure that it would not be of a nature to attract Wordsworth. To one who had not met Shelley, he would be only an eccentric rich young man who had been expelled from the university for defending atheism, and had committed the folly of eloping with an innkeeper's daughter.

There is in the British Museum a manuscript letter from Shelley to Miss Hitchener, dated Keswick, January 2, 1811 [1812], in which he transcribes Wordsworth's "A Poet's Epitaph," and says: "I have transcribed a piece of Wordsworth's poetry. It may give you some idea of the man. How expressively keen are the first stanzas! I shall see this man soon." In the same letter he remarks: "Mrs. Coleridge is come. Mrs. Lovel, who was once an actress, is the best of them."

The year 1811 closed with Coleridge still unreconciled. I do not know that Wordsworth made any effort to get into communication with him. Dorothy was less obdurate, and perhaps she acted for her brother. Mrs. Coleridge, in a letter to Poole, October-November, 1812 (now in the British Museum), writes: "Numerous were the letters and messages I received from Miss W. to urge C. to write to her, and not leave the country without seeing them; but he would not go to them, and they did not come to him, so after staying 6 weeks he returned to give his lectures at Willis's rooms." One loving word would probably have blown away all the accursed darkness that lay between them. In a letter to Beaumont, dated November 16, 1811, Wordsworth writes: "Coleridge is about to deliver a course of lectures upon Poetry at some Institution in the City. He is well, and I learn that The Friend has been a good deal inquired after lately. For ourselves, we never hear from him."* We may well believe what Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson a few weeks later:† "William bears all with calm dignity, neither justifying himself nor com-

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family." I. 534. † *Ibid.*, 541.

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plaining of C." But how we wish he could have laid his dignity aside! Forgiveness and reconciliation never amount to much unless they are complete. Perhaps in this the fallen excel the upright. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! Only after a regrettable lapse of time, and in a rather stern spirit, did Wordsworth take the step which it was his duty to take, as the stronger and happier man. It was a mailed hand that bore the olive-branch.

We find him on May 6, 1812, writing to Mrs. Clarkson from Sir George Beaumont's town-house, in Grosvenor Square, London, whither he has come "with a determination to confront Coleridge and Montagu upon this vile business."* His tone is self-righteous; his language not very tender. Nevertheless, in the course of a month he had accomplished his purpose to some extent, for on June 4 he wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, from the same house, that he had seen Coleridge several times, and had a pleasant walk with him to Hampstead. Yet there remained, as Coleridge sadly complained, "an immedicable *But*," and he wrote to Poole in 1813, referring to the "year-long difference" between Wordsworth and himself, compared with the sufferings of which, he said, "all former afflictions of my life were less than fleabites."† On the day of the walk to Hampstead, Wordsworth's little daughter Catherine died, at Grasmere, her ailment, as one reads the symptoms, being perhaps what is now termed infantile paralysis. De Quincey loved this child with touching devotion, and, writing to him of the sad event, Dorothy Wordsworth says:‡ "It is a great addition to our affliction that her father and mother were not here to see her in the last happy weeks of her short life."

It is evident from Coleridge's letters at this time that he valued Montagu's opinion very little, and Wordsworth's very much; that matters had not been helped by the intervention of Mary Lamb; that writing to Sara Hutchinson and Mrs. Clarkson was of no use; and that

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 3.
† "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 245.
‡ "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 9.

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the one thing needed was a personal meeting between the two old friends, a walk to Hampstead or anywhere else together.

The reconciliation had been so far effected by May 29, 1812, that Wordsworth spent the evening of that day at the Morgans, with whom Coleridge was living. Robinson was another of the useless intermediaries.* He got Wordsworth to talk about himself.

"He spoke," we are told on May 8, "of his own poems with a just feeling of confidence which a sense of his own excellence gives him. . . . The approbation he has met with from some superior persons compensates for the loss of popularity, though no man has completely understood him, not excepting Coleridge, who is not happy enough to enter into his feelings. 'I am myself,' said Wordsworth, 'one of the happiest of men; and no man who does not partake of that happiness, who lives a life of constant bustle, and whose felicity depends on the opinions of others, can possibly comprehend the best of my poems.'" On May 31 Robinson writes: "Found Wordsworth demonstrating to Hamond some of the points of his philosophical theory. Speaking of his own poems, he said he valued them principally as being a new power in the literary world. Hamond's friend Miller esteemed them for their pure morality. Wordsworth said he himself looked to the powers of mind they called forth, and the energies they presuppose and excite as the standard by which they should be tried. He expatiated also on his fears lest a social war should arise between the poor and the rich, the danger of which is aggravated by the vast extension of the manufacturing system. Wordsworth defended earnestly the Church Establishment. He even said he would shed his blood for it. Nor was he disconcerted by a laugh raised against him on account of his having before confessed that he knew not when he had been in a church in his own country. 'All our ministers are so vile,' said he. The mischief of allowing the clergy to depend upon the caprice of the multitude he thought more than outweighed all the evils of an Establishment."

* There are many passages in Robinson's Diary, not printed in Sadler's edition, which show that an astonishingly large number of persons were meddling in the work of bringing the two friends together.

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Under date of May 24, 1812, Robinson makes this interesting entry in his Diary:

"Joined Wordsworth in Oxford Road; we then got into the fields, and walked to Hampstead. I read to him a number of Blake's poems, with some of which he was pleased. He regarded Blake as having in him the elements of poetry much more than either Byron or Scott. We met Miss Joanna Baillie, and accompanied her home. She is small in figure, and her gait is mean and shuffling, but her manners are those of a well-bred woman. She has none of the unpleasant airs too common to literary ladies. . . . Wordsworth said of her with warmth, 'If I had to present anyone to a foreigner as a model of an English gentlewoman, it would be Joanna Baillie.'"

In a letter to his brother, dated May 25, 1812,* Robinson mentions having been at an evening party, where he felt uncomfortable because democrats were present; not that he disliked democrats himself, but he feared lest someone might utter Jacobinical sentiments which would give offence to Wordsworth, who was in the company. This is one of many examples of Wordsworth's power to impose his will and even his prejudices on persons about him.

The bond between Wordsworth and Coleridge might have been further welded in the fire of another affliction through which Wordsworth had to pass before the close of the year 1812. On December 1 he lost his little son Thomas, who died of measles. On hearing the news, Coleridge wrote from London, December 7, a most effusive letter. According to Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge,† it "was not altogether acceptable to the Wordsworths." The offence lay perhaps in his confession: "There is a sense of the word Love, in which I never felt it, but to you and one of your household!" This refers to Sara Hutchinson. The Wordsworths could hardly have been shocked by his using the death of the child as a text for metaphysical speculation: he would not have been Coleridge had he refrained from this; the

* In Dr. Williams's Library, London.

† "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 599, footnote.

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death of his own son Berkeley, years before, had been similarly used in a letter to Mrs. Coleridge.

As one more proof that Coleridge's return to orthodoxy was in some way connected with his moral decay, we may note that in the letter of December 7, 1812, he says: "My faith in . . . all the doctrinal facts of Christianity is become habitual in my understanding, no less than in my feelings." In the very hour of this second bereavement Wordsworth remembered how De Quincey loved the children, to whom his lonely heart had opened with peculiar yearning. He wrote to him at once, and the letter concludes: "Most tenderly and truly, with heavy sorrow for you, my dear friend, I remain Yours, W. WORDSWORTH."

The grief thus generously shared weighed heavily upon the father. "At times I think," wrote Dorothy, in January, 1813, "my brother looks ten years older since the death of Thomas." Dorothy herself had spent many weeks of the year 1812 at Keswick with an eccentric and wealthy old friend, Miss Barker, who, on account of her outspokenness, was in disfavour with the Southeys. Young Basil Montagu, who was an invalid, stayed indefinitely at Miss Barker's, too.

Mrs. Clarkson's letters to Robinson,* in the spring of 1813, show how Coleridge's conduct affected his friends. She writes on March 10:

"I have received a letter from Grasmere which has disturbed me more than I can express. C., as I told you, wrote to them several times after the death of little Tom, and said that he would go down to them were it not that he thought he ought to wait the fate of his tragedy. But he would certainly go if it were successful. William and Dorothy have both written to him to say that nothing would do William so much good as his company and conversation. He has taken no notice whatever of these letters. He sent a copy of the play to Southey, none to them, and they have heard by a letter from Mr. Morgan to Southey or Mrs. C. that C. is going out of town to the seaside ! ! ! Imagine them in the depths of sorrow receiving this cutting intelligence."

* The originals are in Dr. Williams's Library.

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On March 23 she adds that C. has sent copies of his play to Grasmere. She is in great distress about his neglecting his best friends, and fancies he does not even open their letters. On March 25 she notes with pain that Mary Lamb seems to take Coleridge's side, but adds:

"After all, I do incline to think with M. L. that there is something amongst them which makes it perhaps better that they should not meet just now. I am, however, quite sure that nothing like indifference towards him exists on their part, and also that it rests with him entirely to recover all that he has lost in their hearts. I am very glad that I have seen him, though I have gained nothing in Hope or Comfort concerning him. Yet I seem to have gained strength by it, which will, I trust, support me through the agony which I shall have to bear whenever it pleases God to remove him from this world. It cannot be so great as that which I suffered for the extinction of his poetical life. Weak creature that I am! even now I cannot help wishing that the pang had been made easier to me. Had he stayed another month at B. [Bury St. Edmunds], the truth, the awful truth, would have been revealed by slow degrees; he, too, would have been forced to have acknowledged it. He could not have gone back into that gloomy circle in which he has walked for years. He could not have forgotten, when I was there unchanged before him, that he had said, 'Catherine, I shall soon be a poet again. You will make me a poet.' It is past, and I know by experience that

> There is a virtue in the strength of love
> Which makes a thing endurable that else
> Would break the heart."

It is evident that Mrs. Clarkson was a very sentimental person, and also that she divined, but had utterly failed to measure, Coleridge's love for Sara Hutchinson, the "Asra" of his poems.

Wordsworth has been solemnly arraigned for accepting private patronage and a public sinecure. It is true that throughout his life he was much indebted to wealthy admirers. He could not have supported his family on the proceeds of his literary labours without

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descending to a more popular style or choosing subjects of more ephemeral interest. This fact was to him sufficient justification for accepting and even soliciting aid. We need not have recourse to the vulgar argument that he did only what many other poets have done. He himself was too reasonable and too original to have tolerated such a defence. With him the true ground of action was his proud consciousness that he was repaying to mankind a thousandfold what a few representatives of society bestowed upon him. It was, he thought, his just dues, not charity, he received. We may readily grant his contention, and wish he had been even more liberally rewarded. There is, however, one thing which must not be forgotten; it is almost beyond the power of human nature to accept favours without some degree of submission. An irresponsible person like Coleridge could go on his way unchanged. Wordsworth would be anchored by a gift.

Thus it is with a sense of apprehension that we find him on several occasions, in 1812, asking Lord Lonsdale to find for him a Government position which shall add to his income without requiring much of his time. He writes, on February 6:

" I long hoped, depending upon my moderate desires, that the profits of my literary labours, added to the little which I possessed, would have answered all the rational wants of myself and my family. But in this I have been disappointed, and for these causes: firstly, the unexpected pressure of the times, falling most heavily upon men who have no regular means of increasing their income in proportion; secondly, I had erroneously calculated upon the degree in which my writings were likely to suit the taste of the times; and, lastly, much the most important part of my efforts cannot meet the public eye for many years, from the comprehensiveness of the subject."*

Writing to Daniel Stuart for suggestions about a position of the kind desired, Wordsworth—and this will surprise those who think of him chiefly as a " Lake poet "—says:

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 1.

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" I have no objection, I may add, to quit this part of the country, provided the salary be adequate and the duty what I am equal to without being under the necessity of withdrawing myself wholly from literature, which I find an unprofitable concern."*

On December 27, 1812, he writes to Lord Lonsdale accepting the offer of an annual sum until a Government place shall fall vacant. He will without scruple take such a provision from the State, for it is not possible to imagine a more worthy employment of a certain portion of the revenue than rewarding acknowledged ability, and " if to bestow be a duty (and an honourable duty), to accept cannot be otherwise than honourable."† The Bishop of Lincoln (" Memoirs," II. 4), with the enthusiastic approval of Professor Knight (" Life of Wordsworth," II. 211), expresses his desire that such positions should be more numerous. The public conscience has, however, been partly educated on this subject since Wordsworth's time, and indirect ways of rewarding merit are viewed with just suspicion. The effect of patronage upon science and art has, in my own opinion, been on the whole very harmful. Patronage takes many forms—from sinecures under Government to the endowment of prizes and fellowships. Its extent and the varieties of evil which it encourages might well attract the attention of a historian.

Through Lord Lonsdale's influence, Wordsworth received from Government, on March 27, 1813, the office of distributor of stamps in the county of Westmorland. The money value of this position appears to have depended upon the number of stamps purchased; it was estimated at from £400 to £600 per annum. That the Government was paying more than the service was worth is shown by the fact that Wordsworth relinquished £100 per annum to the previous incumbent, Mr. Wilkin, and that most of the work was done by a clerk, Mr. John Carter, who naturally had to be paid some-

* " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 11, and " Letters from the Lake Poets."

† " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 13.

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thing. Exactly how much remained cannot be known, but it was a substantial amount, and made an important difference in Wordsworth's income. It was enough to trouble his conscience, which he soothed by thinking of the responsibility incurred by keeping the stamps in his house.

The change in his circumstances was marked by his removal from Grasmere. The Rectory was associated with the sad events of the previous year. It was separated only by the village street from the churchyard where his little ones were buried. He could now afford to live in a more commodious house. Such a one was available, two miles south-east, above the road to Ambleside. It was known as Rydal Mount, and formed part of the great estate of Sir Michael Le Fleming. Rydal itself was not even a village. There was no church, and the house commanded an uninterrupted view of the woods, the water-front, and the mountains beyond. There was a human loss in leaving Grasmere which was to make itself felt in all the poet's future thought and writing. The humble intimacies of village life had been of inestimable value to him. They had kept open to him one of the main sources of his poetic vigour, the feelings and conduct of poor working people.

Rydal Mount a hundred years ago was a plainer house than it is now, yet large and comfortable. The situation is exceedingly beautiful. Here Wordsworth lived contentedly for thirty-seven years, and here he died. The family removed to it early in the spring of 1813. There is little else to record for this year. The Coleridge boys continued making their week-end visits. Of their father Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson on April 8:*

"God bless him! He little knows with what tenderness we have lately thought of him, nor how entirely we are softened to all sense of injury. We have had no thoughts of him but such as ought to have made him lean upon us with confidential love, and fear not to confess his weaknesses."

* From the original in the British Museum.

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Wordsworth's political opinions had by this time taken their final bent. In a letter to Wrangham, dated August 28, 1813,* he declared that he favoured "resistance of Bonaparte by force of arms," and "adherence to the British Constitution in withholding political power from the Roman Catholics," and therefore was, and had long been by principle, a supporter of the Ministry. That he was not a man to stop short of extremes when he had once taken his direction, the following extract from a letter to his patron, Lord Lonsdale, dated February 9, 1814, will show:†

"Everyone knows of what importance the equestrian order was in preserving tranquillity and a balance and gradation of power in ancient Rome; the like may take place among ourselves through the medium of an armed yeomanry; and surely a preservative of this kind is largely called for by the tendencies of things at present. . . . If the whole island was covered with a force of this kind, the Press properly curbed, the Poor Laws gradually reformed, provision made for new Churches to keep pace with the population (an indispensable measure)—if these things were done and other improvements carried forward, as they have been, order may yet be preserved among us, and the people remain free and happy."

What a respectable old Tory he has become, with his fear of disorder and of a free Press, his dependence on the Church as an ally of the State, his disapproval of "the tendencies of things at present," his willingness to see an armed force cover the land for the sake of "a balance and gradation of power"! This is not the language of poetry, nor had it been the language of Wordsworth's youth; but there was as yet no warrant for assuming that, because he had grown prematurely old in his attitude towards some of the greatest subjects which engage the attention of mankind, he was therefore incapable of artistic efforts of a very high order.

It is true that "The Excursion," which he had completed by the summer of 1814, contained the last abun-

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 29. † *Ibid.*, 25.

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dant product of his old methods of work. But at the very time when his faithful attendants were copying that work for the press, he surprised his friends by writing what Charles Lamb called "A very original poem: I mean original with reference to your own manner."* "Laodamia" is quite distinct from anything he had previously composed. It is his first poem founded solely on classic myth, and elaborated strictly in the classic manner. His translation of Chaucer's "Troilus and Cresida" is, of course, no exception. He was at this time preparing his eldest son for college, and renewing, in that way, his own acquaintance with Virgil and Ovid. His attention was caught by a passage from Pliny's "Natural History," perhaps in some commentary on the sixth book of the "Æneid," in which it is narrated that the trees which grew above the tomb of Protesilaus shot upward till they saw Ilium on the opposite shore of the Hellespont, whereupon they withered and began once more their everlasting growth. Choosing a stately measure, he recast the story of the Greek hero who came from the under-world by permission of the gods to speak eternal truths to his dear wife, Laodamia. The English poet not only gave to some of Virgil's greatest lines a memorable form in our own language, but enriched the world with serious and beautiful thoughts in immortally fresh expression, as when, speaking of the eternal world, Protesilaus says:

> Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains;

and again:

> The Gods approve
> The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul.

The lofty spirit of these lines was destined to breathe anew in the poetry of Wordsworth's greatest disciple, Matthew Arnold. The full import of the old myth is nobly expressed in the following stanza, in which the hero rebukes Laodamia's pitifully human desire for earthly love:

* E. V. Lucas, "Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 457.

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> Learn, by immortal yearning, to ascend—
> Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
> Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
> For this the passion to excess was driven—
> That self might be annulled: her bondage prove
> The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.

The poem is one of those perfect works of art in which nothing could conceivably be altered without loss. Wordsworth tells us in a Fenwick note that it cost him more trouble than almost anything of equal length he had ever written. He revised it anxiously for later editions, in accordance with his principle that "it is frequently true of second words, as of second thoughts, that they are the best."

When Wordsworth, at about the time he wrote "Laodamia," spoke of Milton as his great predecessor, he might well have felt that for versatility at least he was worthy to stand the comparison. The words occur in a letter to Poole, dated April 24, 1814, in which the poet urges his old friend to engage with him in a scheme for raising money to send Hartley Coleridge through college.

Wordsworth's third visit to Scotland was made in 1814. With Mrs. Wordsworth and her sister Sara Hutchinson, he left home July 18. They spent some time on the shores of Loch Lomond, and travelled at least as far north as Dunkeld, but appear to have remained longest in the delightful region south-east of Edinburgh. They formed an intimacy with Robert Pearce Gillies, at that time a man of considerable literary promise, living near Hawthornden. He was editor of *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, and had a wide circle of acquaintances among Scottish men of letters. At Traquair Wordsworth met Dr. Anderson, editor of "The British Poets," and here they were joined by Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, in whose company the party visited the Yarrow. But on the whole the harvest of personal friendships was not more abundant than that of poetical reminiscences, which was meagre. Five poems, of quite inferior value, were the result of this journey, which appears to have lasted well into the autumn.

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The following extracts from letters written by Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson,* beginning in 1814, are evidence that Wordsworth had dealt candidly with his wife and her family, and had by no means avoided all responsibility for his conduct in 1792:

[Postmarked 1814. Addressed to Mrs. Clarkson at Purfleet.]

"HINDWELL, NEAR RADNOR,
"*Sunday night, 9th October.*

"The date of this letter will surprise you, but before I enter into an explanation of it I must speak of what is at this time most interesting to me, you and your travels. During my solitude at Rydal Mount, I for a long while anxiously expected a letter from you from Paris by every post; but at last I gave it up, divining the true reason, and I cannot help very much regretting that you forgot to tell me where to address you while you were there, as I should have been exceedingly glad that you had seen the young woman whom I mentioned to you, the more so as a treaty of marriage is now on foot between her and the Brother of the officer Beaudouin whom I mentioned to you as having been at Rydale, and she and her Mother are extremely anxious that I should be present at the wedding, and for that purpose pressed me very much to go in October. This, unless such good fortune had attended us as being taken under your and your Husband's protection, we could not think of at this season, and therefore I wish that the marriage should be deferred till next spring or summer, because I desire exceedingly to see the poor Girl before she takes another protector than her mother, under whom I believe she has been bred up in perfect purity and innocence, and to whom she is life and light and perpetual pleasure; though from the over-generous dispositions of the mother they have had to struggle through many difficulties. Well, I began to say that I particularly wished that you could have seen them at this time, as through you I should have been able to enter into some explanations, which, imperfectly as I express myself in French, are difficult, and as you would have been able to confirm or contradict the reports which we receive from Caroline's Mother and Mr. Beaudouin of her interesting and amiable qualities.

* From the originals (British Museum, Additional MSS. 36,997), never before printed.

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They both say that she resembles her Father most strikingly, and her letters give a picture of a feeling and ingenuous mind. Yet there must be something, I think, very unfavourable to true delicacy in French manners. Both C. and her Mother urge my going in October on this account, that, after a young woman is once engaged to be married, it is desirable that the delay afterwards should be as short as possible, as she is subject to perpetual scrutiny and unpleasant remarks, and one of the reasons which they urge for marriage in general is that a single woman in France, unless she have a Fortune, is not treated with any *consideration*. . . . We are delighted to hear that you have been so much pleased with Paris and the French people, and now we venture in our little way to expect pleasure and amusement. All the accounts we have received from other quarters have been unfavourable—that neither provisions nor anything else was much cheaper than in England, which, allowing for the loss in exchange, we thought would make things dearer,—and the people rude and brutal in their manners. Now I guess there must have been some fault in the manners of the reporters; yet we cannot help thinking at the same time that your judgment is formed upon the best of the people, to whose society your pretensions and the recommendations which you carried with you naturally introduced you. . . . With respect to the mode of travelling, we, of course, must go as cheaply as possible consistent with tolerable comfort, and in an open carriage, because Sara cannot ride in a close one. Are any of the diligences so constructed? And supposing we can meet with no eligible companion from England, do you think we might venture to go alone? *I* think I should have no fears; but Sara would fain have a gentleman, and we can, at all events, desire Mr. Beaudouin to come from Paris to meet us at Calais. The expense, however, makes the last plan somewhat objectionable. Oh that Henry Robinson were going again! You know I like him well as a companion. And, still a thousand times better, oh that you were going! We should wish to carry presents of English manufacture. Can this be done without much risk or disagreeable trouble? . . . I wish you had sent me your address. I should have liked to have introduced our friend Beaudouin to you, and should have very much wished that it had been possible for you to see his

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brother. . . . I wish you had but visited La Fayette in his retirement. It was, however, a high gratification to see him anywhere. . . . Hazlitt's review [of "The Excursion"] appeared in the *Examiner*. It is not half so good a review as I should have thought he would have written; for, with all his disagreeable qualities, he is a very clever fellow. He says that the narrative parts of the poem are a dead weight upon it; but speaks in raptures of the philosophical. Now, that the narrative will be liked the best by most readers we have no doubt; therefore, we are most glad to hear that the religious and philosophical parts are relished. Of their merit I cannot entertain the faintest shadow of a doubt; yet I am afraid that, for a time, an outcry will be raised by many readers and many reviewers, which may injure the sale."

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, begun on New Year's Eve, 1814, by William, and finished by Dorothy, the latter says:

"Sara is determined to visit you at Bury before her return to Rydale; but it is not possible for her to make any precise arrangements till our French journey is either set aside or the time fixed. April is the month proposed, and if the weather be tolerable we might go as well then as at any other time; but I find that the king is to be anointed in June. All France will be gathered together, and I fear that there may be disturbances; for though all is quiet at present, it is evident enough that the party of discontented and turbulent spirits is very strong. On this account (as we cannot think of staying less than 9 or 10 weeks) I should wish our going to be *after* June—if it be at all. But I never, never so much dreaded to leave home as now, so deeply am I impressed with the image of what William and Mary have lately suffered in my absence, and with the uncertainty of all things. Besides the journey will be very expensive, which we can ill afford, and the money would be better spent in augmenting my Niece's wedding portion. To this effect I have written to her. She would not consent to marry without my presence, which was the reason that April was fixed. A few weeks will decide the point whether we go to France or not, and Sara will then be able to form her plans. At all events I think it would be the wisest way to take

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the first opportunity of going to Bury, yet that can hardly be before April, and then the other journey will most likely be forced upon us. I will if possible contrive, if I go, to see you in my way back, though for a short time, and will trust that you will soon be coming to Rydale. This is a plaguy business that I have teased you about. If it were not for my fears for what may happen at home, I could think of it with satisfaction—nay, with delight, for that dear young woman's sake, whom I believe to be thoroughly amiable. Oh that you were going again to France! Do you know of anybody going?"

Nothing could give a sharper sense of actuality, and of how the great movements of history wrench family life along with them, than Dorothy's next letters to Mrs. Clarkson. Napoleon's escape from Elba, his landing in France, the Hundred Days, Waterloo, the Restoration—how little we realize what havoc these changes must have wrought in the fragile network of society!

"*March* 16, 1815.

"We heard from Sara last night in answer to a proposal of mine that we should set off for France in the first week of May. This determination was made a few days before the news of Buonaparte's entrance into that unhappy country had reached us, and, of course, our plans are for the present put a stop to. Whatever be the result of his projects, it is not likely that it would be prudent to go so soon as we had intended; and a very little time will show whether we can go at all or not. [Here follows speculation concerning Buonaparte's actions.] . . . We are very anxious, as I am sure you are, for every day's news, and it is one comfort, that suspense respecting the probabilities for or against France will soon be at an end. I do not at present carry my cares much further. For the sake of our Friends I am truly distressed. The lady whom I mentioned to you from the first was a zealous Royalist, has often risked her life in defence of adherents to that cause, and she despised and detested Buonaparte. Poor creature! in the last letter which we had from her she spoke only of hope and comfort; said that the king's government was daily gaining strength, and Buonaparte's friends [coming over] in their hearts to the other

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side. A few days after the [evil tidings] reached her she would receive my letter containing the plan of our journey. Sara tells me that you had kindly proposed, in case we could not go to Bury, to meet William and me in London. It is now idle to talk of any plans in connection with a journey to Paris; but at any rate William has given up the idea of going to London this spring. I trust, however, that, if Sara does not go to Bury this spring or summer, we shall see you either there or in London at our return from France, provided it be safe to venture thither this year."

"*Tuesday, April 11th* [1815].

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—

"In common with you, our minds have been occupied continually by the tremendous changes in France. Till we heard of the arrival of B. in Paris I never slept without dreaming of troubles connected with his fiendish ambition, and every night I was kept awake for hours. . . . We had given over taking a newspaper (except the Courier, which came from Keswick), but we could not exist without one sent directly to us. . . . Everybody here is anxious, but none a hundredth part so much as we are. We had a long letter from France written on the 19th and 20th. The letter was concluded at midnight. My Friend says: 'I hear troops entering the City. I think it is the avant-garde of Buonaparte. Good God! What is to become of us?' We have had another letter written the next day in miserable dejection; but she says no more of public affairs than that 'all is quiet.' Lodgings were taken for us in the Hotel du Jardin Turc [More?], Boulevard du Temple, in a pleasant part of Paris, as they describe it. Poor creatures, they say they are shipwrecked when just entering into port. Indeed it is a distressing situation, but I trust that we shall see them in Paris before the end of another twelvemonth.

"The White Doe is printing, and will be out, I hope, in two or three weeks. William will order a copy to be sent to you, but perhaps you can desire somebody to call for it at Longman's. The two volumes of poems are published, and he is sorry he cannot also spare you a copy of them; but he has only a certain number to dispose of. If you cannot afford to buy them, by applying to Henry Robinson, to whom William sends a copy, you can see them. I want you to read the new poems.

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Your receipt for a criticism in the Philanthropist is excellent, and we pray you earnestly to do the work yourself, for there is nobody here who can do it. It would be too independent in us to set about it; and Mr. De Quincey, notwithstanding his learning and his talents, can do nothing. He is eaten up by the spirit of procrastination; but if once in two or three years he actually does make an effort, he is so slow a labourer that no one who knows him would wish to appoint him to it." [She urges Mrs. Clarkson to write something to hasten the sale of The Excursion, saying: "That is all we care about. If this edition were once sold I should not have a moment's anxiety afterwards."]

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, dated June 28 [1815], it appears that Dorothy had charge of the children at home while William and Mary were visiting the Clarksons at Bury, and were at Bocking and London and Coleorton. She speaks of her brother's "unconquerable agitation" when anything ails little William. "But strange it is," she declares, "that I can talk so long of private concerns when I have so much cause to be anxious for the arrival of this night's post, which is to bring tidings of the fate of nations. Upon the Ambleside coach this morning was affixed a paper, 'Great News—*Abdication of Buonaparte*,' but no particulars."

In a letter of "Aug. 15" [1815], after a long outburst against the French and their English admirers, and the expression, "Would that all the English had Prussian hearts, and that our generals and counsellors had the soul of Blucher!" she says:

"It is impossible for me to think of going to Paris this year. We have had letters from our Friends written just after the return of the king. They were in great joy at that event, and urged me and my companions to go, all being safe and quiet. At the same time they waited our determination respecting Caroline's coming over. We could only answer that the time of meeting my Br. and Sr. was gone by, and that we could not appoint any particular plan, knowing of nobody about to return from Paris, and having no friends in London to whom we could with propriety entrust her, but we proposed that the Mother should

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look out for some person or persons coming to London, to whose care she might be consigned till we could hear from her of her arrival there. This I trust may not be difficult, as Madame Vallon* has a numerous acquaintance. I wish you had been in London in lodgings. The great difficulty will be there; for people who might be relied upon for the journey must be continually coming from Paris."

Dorothy was not able to attend her niece's wedding, which was postponed till next year, as the following letter to Mrs. Clarkson shows:

"*April* 4, 1816.

"You ask me if I mean to go to France this spring or summer. I wish it very much, but William and Mary are unwilling that I should venture so soon. For my part I believe that there is nothing to fear for an obscure individual like me, and I believe William would consent provided I could hear of proper companions for the journey. I wish therefore that if you hear of anybody going who would be likely not to object to let me be of their party for the journey, I wish you would lose no time in letting me know. I do not like to put off year after year. Another war would make it impossible, and if I do not go when I can I think it may be out of my power to go at all, and my motives for the journey are very strong. The young person is married to Mr. Beaudouin's Brother. We have just had a letter from them both, written a month after their marriage. I believe him to be a noble-minded, excellent man, and she seems to have well-grounded hopes of happiness, provided poverty can be kept out of doors, but though their present income is very well for two persons, it is not enough for a family. Mr. B. has a place under Government, and will have, they assure us, a certain increase of income in a short time; besides C.'s mother has the promise of a place for herself or one of her family in recompense for services performed by her for the royal cause; but I fear she may wait long for this, as the poor king has not wherewithal to reward all who deserve it. In case of Mr. B.'s death his widow will have half the amount of his present income as a pension. Mr. Eustace Beaudouin is still one of the

* The name Vallon occurs in the annals of Saint-Dié, on the Loire, in 1805. The village is only a few miles from Blois.

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Gardes du Corps. He is much attached to his sister-in-law, and has given us a very pleasing account of her. The mother's details of the wedding festivities would have amused you. She was to give the fête, she who perhaps for half a year to come will feel the effects of it at every dinner she cooks! Thirty persons were present to dinner, ball, and supper. The deputies of the department and many other respectable people were there. The bride was dressed in white sarsenet, with a white veil—' was the admiration of all who beheld her, but her modesty was her best ornament.' She kept her veil on the whole of the day. How truly French this is! Sara's desire to go to France is much abated since the removal of the pictures, etc., and, indeed, I know not how we can afford the expense of both going this year, and I should be very unwilling, if I could hear of companions, to put off either for the sake of better times or for the insecure promise of the company of my friends, great as would be the comfort of having an English friend with me at Paris. Should I go to France this summer, I should also have the happiness of seeing you, for I could not be so near you without it."

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CHAPTER XXVI

"THE EXCURSION"

"THE EXCURSION" was published in a sumptuous quarto in July, 1814, with a wretched dedicatory sonnet to the Earl of Lonsdale, a short prose Preface, and 107 introductory lines of magnificent poetry, now printed as the last lines of "A Fragment of The Recluse." The price was two guineas. As we have seen, it had occupied the poet's mind with increasing exclusiveness almost from the time of his arrival in Grasmere. Portions of it, indeed, were written at Racedown or Alfoxden.* The plan of executing a great work, a long philosophical poem, which should embody the results of his experience and thinking, had been formed before even the first two books of "The Prelude" were composed. It had been discussed with Coleridge. It had finally taken in Wordsworth's life a supremacy contested only by desires for public service, such as we find translated in his tract on the Convention of Cintra. Yet with all the many explanations of his purpose which exist in his notes and correspondence, one can form no precise idea of what it was. This much, however, is plain; there was to be a poem, in three parts, entitled "The Recluse." "The Excursion" is the second member of this projected whole. Of the first part, only one book was ever written, the splendid lines known as the "Fragment of The Recluse." This gives no clue as to how many books were intended to follow, nor with what topics they were to deal. Of a

* In the Fenwick note Wordsworth distinctly avers that lines 871 to 916 of Book I. were composed in 1795, and lines 1207 to 1275 next in order at Racedown or Alfoxden. If so much, probably far more, especially of Book I., was probably composed at that early time, though perhaps not in finished form.

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third part nothing was ever written, and there is no trace even of a plan. " The Prelude " is a separate work.

One would scarcely imagine, from reading " The Excursion," that it was not an independent poem. How it was to have been related to Parts I. and III. is not evident. As an excuse for publishing it first, the author, in his Preface, says: " As the second division of the work was designed to refer more to passing events, and to an existing state of things, than the others were meant to do, more continuous exertion was naturally bestowed upon it, and greater progress made here than in the rest of the poem." Balzac, at a certain point in his career, decided, not only that his future works should belong to a system, but that many already written were suitable for adoption into the " Comédie Humaine." In like manner, and with even less valid reason, Wordsworth announced in 1814 that " The Prelude " would be to " The Recluse " what the ante-chapel is to the body of a Gothic cathedral, and that his minor pieces, which had been long before the public, would, when properly arranged, be like " the little cells, oratories and sepulchral recesses ordinarily included in those edifices."

Constructive power was certainly not Wordsworth's strongest faculty. Nor had he the gift of seeing his own works as if through the eyes of other people. When we observe the many cunning devices by which Virgil and Dante have varied the progress of their long poems, while at the same time bringing into ever clearer relief the one grand idea in each, we cannot help smiling at Wordsworth's confidence that human nature would tolerate a poem so loosely knit and yet so monotonous as apparently his was planned to be. Yet in all his other works, verse or prose, he shows the true artist's instinct for design, keeping one purpose always in view, isolating his subject, and giving to every production a definite, inevitable, and foreseen end. We may take for granted, then, that " The Recluse " was carefully planned, though Coleridge's bewilderment,* on finding

* Letter to Wordsworth, May 30, 1815.

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" The Excursion " quite a different thing from what he had expected, leads to the conclusion that an original and much grander design was abandoned.

" The Excursion " as a whole has not in itself that unity which doubtless the projected work would have had, and which " The Prelude," taken by itself, actually has. There is no apparent reason why it should end where it does, and its purpose is not obvious. In the main, the first half contains the statement of a philosophical position, and the second half a number of human stories which are supposed in some way to establish or illustrate it.

The formal scheme of the whole is simple. The poet is represented as meeting accidentally a respected friend, an old Scottish peddler, whose travels have enriched his naturally powerful mind. This man, the Wanderer, relates the story of a poor woman whose happy home was broken up by " the plague of war," but who endured her fate with quiet courage. The description of the Wanderer, and this tale of Margaret, filled the First Book, which is in many ways distinct from the other eight. Much of it was written at Racedown and Alfoxden. So completely, indeed, was the frame already fixed of what is now Book Two, that when, nearly twenty years later, the poet incorporated this portion in " The Excursion," he was unable to avoid the inconsistency of having the scene begin on a bare common in the south of England, and then, for no apparent reason, suddenly change to the region of the Lakes. The real reason was that the rest of the poem was to consist largely of stories from actual life among the hills and descriptions of the scenery there.

The Wanderer is thoroughly characterized. He is a Christian optimist, well furnished with theological dogma, and rather grimly triumphant in the apparent failure of the age of reason. With the opening of Book Two we are unmistakably in the Lake country. The Wanderer invites the poet to walk with him to the lonely pass which connects Upper and Lower Langdale, there to visit the Solitary, a man who has withdrawn

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from a world in which his hopes have been baffled and his faith in God and man shaken. The Solitary tells the story of his life in Book Three, and the Wanderer in the Fourth attempts to correct his despondency by showing that communion with nature and the exercise of imagination are sources of divine knowledge, and capable of lifting the soul above the rough ground where reason stumbles. In Book Five all three descend to "a large and populous vale," which in most of its features is the Vale of Grasmere, where they enter the churchyard and church, commenting on what they see. The Pastor joins them, and supports the Poet and the Wanderer in their efforts to correct the Solitary's views. The Sixth Book opens with a eulogy on the State and Church of England. The Pastor, looking at the green mounds of the dead, recalls the lives of many former members of his mountain parish. The mere recital of human stories, with no effort to point a moral, awakens in the Solitary a certain zest for things as they are. The Seventh Book is a continuation of the Sixth. In Book Eight the four speakers enter the parsonage, and the talk turns to a criticism of science, the rise of manufacturing industry, and the degradation of the agricultural population. In the Ninth Book the value of state schools and compulsory education is eloquently proclaimed; the Wanderer declares that an active principle pervades the universe; the Pastor identifies this spirit with the God of Christendom, to whom he utters a prayer of gratitude; and finally the Solitary, deeply affected, departs. "What renovation had been brought" to this dejected man will, if the poet receives encouragement from hope and gentle hearts and lofty minds, be told in future labours—*i.e.*, the Third and never-written part of "The Recluse."

A captious criticism might deny that there was sufficient connection between the theoretical and the practical parts of the poem; but it seems to me rather an evidence of Wordsworth's fidelity to nature that he refrained from distorting even imaginary facts to suit the most cherished theory. He realized that the most

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common events are the most important, and yet that common things do not wear, save to a poet's eye, the outward marks of their significance. So the unity of "The Excursion," as a philosophical treatise, is not impaired by the contrast between its abstract speculative part and the simple tales which follow. We have here an instance of what is perhaps the only proper method of building up a philosophical system. But as a work of art, designed to charm the senses and produce a sense of smoothness and delight, the poem is no doubt marred by this violent contrast of methods.

What is the philosophical doctrine of "The Excursion"? First of all, that the universe is ruled by a spiritual Person, much like ourselves at our best, with affections and a will. Secondly, that human life, on the whole, is morally admirable and worth while, especially in view of the poet's belief in the future existence of souls. Thirdly, that correspondences exist between the human soul and external nature in its original beauty, or even as modified by man working in the spirit of nature, correspondences by means of which may be enjoyed a communion with the divinity existing in all things fair.

"The Excursion" marks the third phase of a great literary duel between optimism and a doubting mood which at least bore some semblance of pessimism. The first phase was represented by Pope's "Essay on Man"; the second by Voltaire's "Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake," and his novel "Candide." The French poet entered the combat with deeper seriousness and better skill than Pope. Shocked by the latter's easy acceptance of appearances, he appealed to history and individual experience to disprove the shallow faith that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Wordsworth, bidding the victor turn and meet a fresh antagonist, widens the field of argument so as to include not only the phenomena of observation, but the objects of faith. If there is a merciful and all-powerful spirit in the universe, the face of disaster is altered, and what seems waste may be the seed of future gain. In the

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light of eternity it may be that events seemingly of the utmost perverseness may prove to have been ordained for good. Furthermore, in the lives of many men and women who have to outward appearance been failures, compensations even in this world may be discerned—patience learned through suffering, humility through defeat, strength from striving, and many another virtue easily overlooked except by the eye of love. And it is always with the eye of love that Wordsworth studies his characters. In one after another of the sketches which illustrate "The Excursion," unexpected kindness and tenderness are discovered in harsh or dull or merely ordinary persons, and some of those who were in their time esteemed most unhappy are found to have drunk from hidden springs of joy.

The poet offers no new argument in favour of personal immortality. He is fain to rest content with mere assertion, and here, certainly, his character-sketches lend little or no support to his theory; for if we are convinced that there is less evil and unhappiness in life than we supposed, if the life and death of men are seen to be similar in majesty and naturalness to the life and death of trees, we shall feel less need for a doctrine of future compensation. Yet Wordsworth, without leading up to it, insists upon the doctrine. The Wanderer, who no doubt voices the author's theological opinions, says:

> I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
> Are glorified; or, if they sleep, shall wake
> From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
> Hope, below this, consists not with belief
> In mercy, carried infinite degrees
> Beyond the tenderness of human hearts:
> Hope, below this, consists not with belief
> In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
> That finds no limits but her own pure will.

The force and frequency with which the poet enunciates these sublime commonplaces should not be mistaken for argument. He merely proves that he is himself convinced. He goes so far as to conclude, from the strength of his own feelings, that instinct and subconscious ap-

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prehensions, and even superstition, are truer guides than reason. He as much as says that a man had better trust the judgment of remote and savage ancestors than his own. It is a plea for obscurantism. But it is not merely this. To poets more than to other men, and to Wordsworth more than to other poets, belongs a faculty for discovering those precious yet subtle truths which the net of reason is too coarse to catch. "The Excursion" is a vindication of this faculty, which may be defined as the power of interpreting Nature by Imagination. Through exercising it, we are told, primitive man discovered the rudimentary laws of astronomy, peopled the streams and groves with divinities, and developed a spirit of reverence. Speaking to one who is supposed to represent a rationalistic age, The Wanderer says:

> Access for you
> Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
> Which the imaginative Will upholds
> In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
> By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
> With her minute and speculative pains,
> Opinion, ever changing.

The poet of "The Excursion," it should be distinctly noted, claims for the faculty of immediate vision a vast though vague superiority over the understanding. To support this claim, he brings only transcendental proofs, the cry of the heart, the mind's impatience. He is far enough now from the main principle of the Enlightenment—that the supreme distinction of man is his understanding, and that by this, as a touchstone, all emotions, instincts, faiths, and revelations, must ultimately be tested. Speaking generally, the religion and the poetry, the music, painting, and sculpture, the politics and social order, of the nineteenth century, till near its close, owed their peculiar tone and direction to an acceptance of the doctrine which Wordsworth was now proclaiming—the doctrine of immediacy, of direct spontaneous apprehension, of the soul's freedom from all trammels, either of the senses or of logic. Science, on the other hand, from which a fresh art and a renovated politics have grown,

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remained on the whole faithful to the humbler philosophy of the eighteenth century and of Wordsworth's better period. Humbler I say, though the charge made against it, a hundred years ago, was that it aspired too much.

To what extent Wordsworth in " The Excursion " shows the influence of German transcendentalism, of Kant and his followers, and particularly of Schelling, is another part of the subject. Even if traces of such influence are found, they may be due to conversations with Coleridge, rather than to Wordsworth's own reading. He needed not, at all events, to look abroad, or even to Plato and the English Platonists of the seventeenth century, for his favourite theme—namely, that the peculiar act of poetry is to indicate where and how imagination may interpret nature. We may fairly credit him in so far with originality, with passionate originality. He knew from experience that a poetic interpretation of nature sets men free from timid calculations, lifts them over unnecessary processes, brings them out of themselves, and puts them in a larger world than they could otherwise enter. After the famous description of a sea-shell whose murmurings express

> Mysterious union with its native sea,

the poet exclaims:

> Even such a shell the universe itself
> Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
> I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
> And central peace subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation.

Unfortunately, the poet is not content, as in the " Lines Written above Tintern Abbey," to proclaim his joy in this discovery. He shows that he is irritated with those who find their highest satisfaction elsewhere. The real antithesis of imagination is not reason, but apathy, as he virtually admits in his Argument to the Fourth Book; yet it is reason, after all, which he attacks in the text.

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Unquestionably, Wordsworth, at this stage of his development, was inclining to a philosophical attitude which was the very opposite of the one he had maintained under Godwin's influence. The strength of his imagination had even in childhood made him lean in the direction of mysticism. From Rousseau he may have received an additional impulse. And now the restraining influence of Godwin was withdrawn. The essence of this type of philosophy has been very fairly expressed by Mr. Bertrand Russell in his essay on "Mysticism and Logic," as "the belief in insight as against discursive analytic knowledge; the belief in a way of wisdom, sudden, penetrating, coercive, which is contrasted with the slow and fallible study of outward appearance by a science relying wholly upon the senses." Developing this idea, he continues: "It is common to speak of an opposition between instinct and reason; in the eighteenth century the opposition was drawn in favour of reason, but under the influence of Rousseau and the romantic movement instinct was given the preference, first by those who rebelled against artificial forms of government and thought, and then, as the purely rationalistic defence of traditional theology became increasingly difficult, by all who felt in science a menace to creeds which they associated with a spiritual outlook on life and the world."

But we must always be on our guard against the common unthinking view that imagination deals with unrealities, and the almost equally false view that it deals only with the general, and not the particular. Nor does it operate only by a process of comparison. Imagination works primarily by appreciating that which is unique, and which therefore cannot be wholly expressed in terms of anything extraneous. This, at least, is the first step. Every object in the universe is unique. Not all poets are imaginative, by any means, but an imaginative poet understands the things of nature by exercising what we may call, in a phrase of M. Bergson's, "the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to

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coincide with what is unique in it, and therefore inexpressible." In thus reverencing the concrete, science and the highest poetry agree, and they have their reward in the discovery of laws which are both general and spiritual. Wordsworth, by reporting faithfully the particularities of nature, was able to do justice to the material world. Only by appreciating it could he transcend it, for the spiritual life, so far as we *know*, is inherent in the material.

In controversy, Wordsworth loses charm in proportion as he displays power. He shows a desire to carry everything before him. We feel that he is not generous. In this poem a figure is set up, called the Solitary, who is supposed to have suffered many illusions during the Revolution. Moreover, he has been embittered by the death of his wife and children. Quite gratuitously, it is assumed that, because he had entertained " an overweening trust " in " the transcendent wisdom of the age," therefore he

> through the course
> Of private life licentiously displayed
> Unhallowed actions.

This is unfair to the poor Solitary, and still more so to the Reverend Joseph Fawcett, his prototype. The dramatic effect of the poem is weakened by thus making one of the speakers a man of straw. He is under suspicion from the first. His smiles are said to be " sardonic " and his words " sarcastic." The reader feels this injustice, and would be very glad to see the Solitary triumph over his pharisaical opponent, the Wanderer. The latter, who is a philosophical prig, is shocked to find, on the sacred soil of England, a copy of Voltaire's " Candide "—

> dull product of a scoffer's pen,
> Impure conceits discharging from a heart
> Hardened by impious pride !

If even the most appreciative and grateful readers feel that somehow " The Excursion," in spite of many noble qualities, is not quite a success, the chief reason for discontent may be this unbecoming eagerness of

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Wordsworth, the controversialist, which has made him unfair to one of the chief speakers in the dialogue. No other objections that have been urged against this great poem have much weight. To say it is too long is to beg the question. To call its subject-matter prosaic is to imply that the highest flights of speculation and the infinitely touching details of actual life are unsuitable for poetic treatment. Or is it that the treatment is unpoetical? Here we must discriminate between mere style and the general pitch of the work. That it is pitched in a poetic and not a prose key would be evident to anyone who should try to rewrite or retell even a few lines of it. There are defects of style, the worst being the use of long parentheses and double negatives, and the piling-up of phrases when a sentence is already structurally complete. But the diction is in the main suitable both to the subjects discussed and to the speakers. There is, to be sure, a jarring discrepancy between the minute and homely realism of the narratives and the Wanderer's eloquent speeches. On one page we have the simple details of his bringing up, and on the next he speaks as sublimely as Milton's archangels, and, like them, to an audience of two. A certain pietistic flavour, something new in Wordsworth, is perceptible here and there. It is assumed, for example, that men of science are necessarily unimaginative, cold, irreligious,

> Lost in a gloom of uninspired research.

We deplore the fact that Wordsworth had surrendered so much of his natural independence as to accept this foolish view, and must be prepared for many other instances of a change. Such things do not disturb our respect when we find them in the pages of Cowper, where at the very least they sound pleasantly quaint; but in Wordsworth they indicate a moral decline and a break with his own past. There are unnecessary passages, chiefly of description. Certainly, however, those readers at least who do not complain of Cowper's leisurely pace, or the vast redundancy in Swinburne, or Tennyson's elegant embroidery in "The

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Idylls of the King," might, one would suppose, easily tolerate a few hundred unnecessary lines of Wordsworth. That the poem comes to no striking climax is due perhaps to the fact that it is only the second part of a trilogy. That it is badly named must be admitted. So much for its shortcomings! They are far outnumbered and outweighed by features of beauty and manifestations of wisely directed power. The poem is full of minor attractions besides the interest of its great philosophical theme. For one thing, it is pre-eminently the poem of the Lake country, and in no other work of Wordsworth or anyone else has the life of a particular "nook of English ground" been portrayed with more distinctness and poetic truth. There are dozens of passages the full force of which can be felt only by one who has lived in the vales and known some of their inhabitants of the old stock. The poet tells what he *saw:* the dull red stains and tufts of wool left on corner stones by sheep, the lamb sheltered by its mother on a sunny ledge—we feel more grateful to him for noticing these than for his descriptions of sunsets, which other poets have not failed to observe. The house of the ingenious sporting parson, which is depicted so minutely, still stands beside the road from Grasmere to Wythburn. In Dorothy's Journal we have a dozen records of stopping there for tea, and the Simpsons, who lived there, were at one time the only other educated people in the vale. The substance of this sketch at least—and we may safely assume that it is the case with most of the others—was obtained by direct and long-continued observation. True scientific and true poetical methods are much the same, after all. One is reminded of Henri Poincaré's remark that facts which have a chance of recurring are simple facts; and, as if he were actually thinking of Wordsworth's process, he again says (in his essay on "Science and Method"): "What we [men of science] must aim at is not so much to ascertain resemblances and differences as to discover similarities hidden under apparent discrepancies."

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"The Excursion" is singularly rich in variety. It is like one of the larger Lake-country rivers, the Rothay, the Brathay, or the Derwent, in the great number of reaches that diversify its course, no two of them alike, and every one a world.

After all, however, the chief element of biographical interest in this poem is that, scarcely less than "The Prelude," it is a commentary on the Revolution. Even the great doctrine of the "life" of what men call "inanimate" objects is a part of the levelling process favoured by the Revolution. In one sense "The Excursion" is intended to demonstrate the failure of Revolutionary hopes and the resulting prostration of those who held them. Let us admit our failure, the poet seems to say, and retrieve our error by building on a broader basis. To be sure, the undercurrent of Book One flows in the opposite direction. In spite of revisions, it still shows its relationship to "Guilt and Sorrow" and "The Female Vagrant." The life of the poor is described as if from within, by one who was himself separated by no barrier of caste from the social world of the unfortunate Margaret. War is considered from an economic standpoint and without regard to national pride, glory, or honour.

We rejoice that, though the poet recanted from the philosophy of Revolution, he still preserved those sympathies which made him the poet of Revolution. He scorned the fundamental doctrine of aristocracy, namely, that God has seen fit, in His inscrutable wisdom, to withhold from the mass of mankind the perception of those moral truths upon which political coherence depends. In a passage of great eloquence (Book IX., lines 206-228) he asserts the equality of all men in the world of sense and in the common possession of reason, imagination, conscience, and the assurance of immortality, and draws the following conclusion:

> Strange, then, nor less than monstrous, might be deemed
> The failure, if the Almighty, to this point
> Liberal and undistinguishing, should hide
> The excellence of moral qualities

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From common understanding; leaving truth
And virtue, difficult, abstruse, and dark;
Hard to be won, and only by a few;
Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,
And frustrate all the rest! Believe it not:
The primal duties shine aloft—like stars;
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
Are scattered at the feet of Man—like flowers.
The generous inclination, the just rule,
Kind wishes, and good actions, and pure thoughts—
No mystery is here! Here is no boon
For high—yet not for low; for proudly graced—
Yet not for meek of heart. The smoke ascends
To heaven as lightly from the cottage-hearth
As from the haughtiest palace. He, whose soul
Ponders this true equality, may walk
The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;
Yet, in that meditation, will he find
Motive to sadder grief, as we have found;
Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,
And for the injustice grieving, that hath made
So wide a difference between man and man.

"The Excursion" was received by Wordsworth's friends with deep respect, by some of them with enthusiasm, and by one with disappointment. It was much noticed in the reviews. Among that small portion of the public who took any interest in poetry it appears to have established his reputation as an author who had done something "big," though the number who actually read it was probably small. Scott's novels and poetical romances, Byron's poems, and the newspaper accounts of Napoleon's last campaign, left little opportunity for doing justice to a work of such length and depth. Upon the intellectually vulgar, who are ever ready to ridicule genius, an ineffaceable impression was produced by the first sentence of Jeffrey's review in *The Edinburgh*, "This will never do!" They were glad to have the matter so quickly and amusingly settled. In consequence both of the favour and of the disfavour met by the poem, it became famous at once, and henceforth Wordsworth was often—too often—known as "the author of 'The Excursion.'"

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Charles Lamb, thanking Wordsworth for an early copy,* pronounced it the noblest conversational poem he had ever read. He said he recognized the story of Margaret, having remembered it since the time he first saw its author, at Stowey. He makes a comical protest against the amount of description of mountain scenery. Himself this has not overpowered or discouraged, though "Mary seems to have felt it occasionally a little too powerfully"; she thought it doubtful whether by Wordsworth's system a Liver in Towns had a Soul to be Saved. He flies to the rescue on the question of the dulness of "Candide"; it was dull even to him, who had "a wider range in buffoonery —too much toleration perhaps."† He challenges the poet to declare whether he is a Christian or whether the Pedlar and the Priest speak only as dramatic characters. He wished to review the poem in *The Quarterly*, but was too busy in the early part of the autumn with extra work at the East India House. When his article finally came out, late in the year, it had been so disfigured by Gifford, the editor of *The Quarterly Review*, that Lamb's face burned with vexation as he read it. "Every warm expression," he wrote to Wordsworth, "is changed to a nasty cold one;" "the eyes are pulled out and the bleeding sockets are left."‡

Henry Crabb Robinson first saw a copy of the "great new poem" at Norwich, on August 13, 1814. "It is," he wrote in his Diary, "a poem of formidable size, and I fear too mystical to be popular. It will, however, put an end to the sneers of those who consider or affect to consider him puerile. But it will possibly draw on him the imputation of dulness." It is curious to see the contradictory imputations thus early brought together—that Wordsworth is trivial, and that he is too exalted. When Robinson, on November 23, had really read the poem, he felt reassured.

* E. V. Lucas, "Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," Vol. VI., p. 434: letter of August 9, 1814.

† *Ibid.*, p. 444: letter of September 19, 1814.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 452: letter of January, 1815.

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" It has," he wrote, " afforded me less intense pleasure on the whole, perhaps, than I had expected, but it will be a source of frequent gratification. The wisdom and high moral character of the work are beyond anything of the same kind with which I am acquainted, and the spirit of the poetry flags much less frequently than might be expected. There are passages which run heavily, tales which are prolix, and reasonings which are spun out, but in general the narratives are exquisitely tender. . . . Wordsworth has succeeded better in light and elegant painting in this poem than in any other."

We must remember that Robinson was a lenient reader. He was one of Wordsworth's first disciples, and by nature loyal. And his acquaintance with German poetry and metaphysics had accustomed him on the one hand to the use of plain diction in verse, and on the other to any amount of prolixity. He frequently recurs to the subject of " The Excursion," which he reread with increasing approval.

Southey was unstinting in his praise. Wordsworth was anxious for a favourable verdict from Poole, and doubtless got one. He had thought especially of Poole when describing the ill-effects of manufacturing industry. There was by this time something like a Wordsworth circle in London, including even so incorrigible a romancer and sentimentalizer as Leigh Hunt. Flaxman and Haydon belonged to the number. Especially after the appearance of Jeffrey's damnatory criticism in *The Edinburgh Review*, it became a touchstone of good taste to have read and enjoyed the poem.

Coleridge's judgment, which of course Wordsworth most anxiously awaited, was long withheld. He finally explained his attitude, in a very manly letter, making no attempt to conceal the fact that he was disappointed. His criticism went far below the surface, to the design and substance of the poem. He knew how all-important to Wordsworth it was that this supreme effort should show increase of power and prove a memorable contribution to the world's intellectual wealth. Yet, as he compared the ideas in

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"The Excursion" with those he remembered having discussed with his friend, he felt that they were meagre, unsystematic, and often commonplace. He traced in outline the great philosophical poem which he had in mind, such a poem as a Christian Lucretius should have written, but the world had never seen.* Perhaps Wordsworth might have written such a work, with Coleridge at his side. The combined genius of the two would certainly have been required.

The first hint of Coleridge's dissatisfaction is found in a letter of his to Lady Beaumont, dated April 3, 1815.† He writes: "Of the Excursion, excluding the tale of the ruined cottage (the story of Margaret, begun at Racedown), which I have ever thought the finest poem in our language, comparing it with any of the same or similar length, I can truly say that one-half the number of its beauties would make all the beauties of all his contemporary poets collectively mount to the balance: but yet—the fault may be in my own mind—I do not think, I did not feel, it equal to the work on the growth of his own spirit." In the same letter Coleridge asks Lady Beaumont to return to him a copy of his own lines to Wordsworth after his recitation of "The Prelude." The contents of this letter being communicated by Lady Beaumont to Wordsworth, the latter wrote to Coleridge for an explanation, which was given in a long letter of May 30.‡ Here once again, after the lapse of many years and over the half-bridged chasm of the old quarrel, Coleridge stretches out his hand in loving homage. "It is," he declares, "most uncomfortable, from many, many causes, to express anything but sympathy and gratulation to an absent friend, to whom, for the most substantial third of a life, we have been habituated to look up: especially where a love, though increased by

* That he overlooked Dante seems unaccountable, till one remembers that Dante was still almost everywhere overlooked, save in his own country. The cordial reception of Cary's translation, in 1818, marks the beginning of something like a general acknowledgment of his greatness, in England.

† E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 641.

‡ *Ibid.*, 643.

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many and different influences, yet begun and throve and knit its joints in the perception of his superiority." He denies having intended to print the lines addressed to Wordsworth. "Not knowing," he says, "of any copy in my own possession, I sent for them, because I was making a MS. collection of *all* my poems—publishable and unpublishable—and still more, perhaps, for the handwriting of the only perfect copy, that entrusted to her ladyship." If this about the handwriting was a reference to Sara Hutchinson, as I think likely, it would not please Wordsworth. Coleridge frankly admits that, as compared with "the former poem"—*i.e.*, "The Prelude"—"The Excursion," so far as it was new to him, had disappointed his expectations. He conjectured that the inferiority "might have been occasioned by the influence of self-established convictions having given to certain thoughts and expressions a depth and force which they had not for readers in general." This is a perfect formula for a whole swarm of objections urged by many readers against most of Wordsworth's poetry. With time, as other men's thoughts and expressions have proved more or less ephemeral, and Wordsworth's have in an eminent degree held their own, this class of objection has tended to disappear. Wordsworth must have felt sorely tried when Coleridge, no matter with how much dignity of phrase, uttered the common charge. For it amounted to denying that he possessed that insight into the common heart of man which was the source of half his greatness, and it was a condemnation of his artistic method, the method upon which he once thought Coleridge and he had fully agreed.

Passing to his other objection, Coleridge continued: "Whatever in Lucretius is poetry is not philosophical, whatever is philosophical is not poetry; and in the very pride of confident hope I looked forward to The Recluse as the *first* and *only* true philosophical poem in existence. Of course, I expected the colours, music, imaginative life, and passion of *poetry;* but the matter and arrangement of *philosophy;* not doubting from

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the advantages of the subject that the totality of a system was not only capable of being harmonized with, but even calculated to aid, the unity (beginning, middle, and end) of a poem. Thus, whatever the length of the work might be, still it was a *determinate* length; of the subjects announced, each would have its own appointed place, and, excluding repetitions, each would relieve and rise in interest above the other."

In short, he hoped that his strong-willed friend, whose superiority he so ungrudgingly admitted, would do in verse what he himself had vainly dreamed of doing in the easier medium of prose. He was convinced that what the world needed most was a systematic and, at the same time, literary statement of philosophic idealism, together with a glowing demonstration of its vital identity with Christian doctrine and history. After his terrific recoil from the " sensational " psychology of Locke, he had flung himself towards the opposite extreme. While appearing to float aimlessly in a mist of many colours and no distinct outline, he was really high above the flight of other minds, at an altitude whence he descried, like an eagle, the fields of future conflict.

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CHAPTER XXVII

WAR WITH REVIEWERS

PROBABLY the first review or extended notice of " The Excursion " was that begun in *The Examiner* for August 21, 1814, and continued on August 28 and October 2. The writer was William Hazlitt. His judgment of the poem as a whole and of Wordsworth's genius was highly favourable; regarding particulars, and very essential ones, it was severe, though shallow. As a professional essayist of the kind then beginning to go out of fashion, Hazlitt embraces the opportunity to write a clever satire on country life, which he affects to find selfish and barbarous. To his mind the stories contained in the poem detract from its merit, and that not merely because they break its harmony as a philosophical work, but because, with two exceptions, that of the Whig and Jacobite gentlemen and that of Sir Alfred Irthing, their subjects are " low." This from Hazlitt, the unreconciled Revolutionist, is rather unexpected.

" We can go along with him," he declares, " while he is the subject of his own narrative, but we take leave of him when he makes pedlars and ploughmen his heroes and the interpreters of his sentiment. It is, we think, getting into low company, and company, besides, that we do not like. We take Mr. Wordsworth himself for a great poet, a fine moralist, and a deep philosopher; but if he insists on introducing us to a friend of his, a parish clerk, or the barber of the village, who is as wise as himself, we must be excused if we draw back with some little want of cordial faith." Again he says: " The extreme simplicity which some persons have objected to Mr. Wordsworth's poetry is to be found only in the

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subject and the style: the sentiments are subtle and profound. In the latter respect, his poetry is as much above the common standard or capacity, as in the other it is below it. His poems bear a distinct resemblance to some of Rembrandt's landscapes, who more than any other painter created the medium through which he saw Nature, and out of the stump of an old tree, a break in the sky, and a bit of water, could produce an effect almost miraculous."

However much there may have been in this passage to discourage the poet, since it was evident that even so acute and receptive a mind as Hazlitt's had failed to apprehend the principles of the new poetry, nevertheless it was some comfort that so early as August 21 a popular magazine could print the following sentence, with which the essay began:

" In power of intellect, in lofty conception, in the depth of feeling, at once simple and sublime, which pervades every part of it, and which gives to every object an almost preternatural and preterhuman interest, this work has seldom been surpassed."

As to the subjects chosen by the poet, Hazlitt was too sophisticated and too coarse-grained to sympathize with him. He says:

" In describing human nature, Mr. Wordsworth equally shuns the common vantage-grounds of popular story, of striking incident, or fatal catastrophe, as illegitimate or vulgar modes of producing an effect. . . . He contemplates the passions and habits of men, not in their extremes, but in their first elements. . . . He only sympathizes with those forms of feeling which mingle at once with his own identity or the stream of general humanity. To him the great and the small are the same; the near and the remote; what appears, and what only is. The common and the permanent, like the Platonic ideas, are his only realities."

The same failure to understand the fundamental principles of Wordsworth's art is shown in the following passage:

" We could have wished Mr. Wordsworth had given to his work the form of a philosophical poem altogether,

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with only occasional digressions or allusions to particular instances. There is in his general sentiments and reflections on human life a depth, an originality, a truth, a beauty, and grandeur, both of conception and expression, which place him decidedly at the head of the poets of the present day, or rather which place him in a totally distinct class of excellence. But he has chosen to encumber himself with a load of narrative and descriptions which, instead of assisting, hinders the progress and effect of the general reasoning."

The reviewer quite properly objects to the adjective "dull" as applied to a work of Voltaire. There is one really noble passage in the article—Hazlitt's rebuke to Wordsworth for his cold renunciation of Revolutionary hopes. After a glowing description of those hopes, he concludes:

"The dawn of that day was suddenly overcast; that season of hope is past; it is fled with the other dreams of our youth, which we cannot recall; but has left behind it traces which are not to be effaced by birthday odes, or the chanting of Te Deums in all the churches of Christendom. To those hopes eternal regrets are due; to those who maliciously and wilfully blasted them in the fear that they might be accomplished, we feel no less what we owe—hatred and scorn as lasting."

Jeffrey's famous article on "The Excursion" in *The Edinburgh Review* for November, 1814, is by no means a criticism to be lightly set aside. He had the instinct of a good football player, who always knows who is running with the ball. He understood what Wordsworth was aiming at, and, since he wished poetry to take a different course, he tried to block him. And, as compared with the encounters seven years before, his tackling was fairer and harder. His abundant good taste and his natural zest for originality of thought and phase compelled him to grant that Wordsworth possessed great powers. There were in the poem, he admitted, many passages of tenderness, and others in a lofty and impassioned style.

"When we look back to them, indeed," he says near the end of his review, "and to the other passages which

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we have now extracted, we feel half inclined to rescind the severe sentence which we passed on the work at the beginning. But when we look into the work itself, we perceive that it cannot be rescinded. Nobody can be more disposed to do justice to the great powers of Mr Wordsworth than we are; and, from the first time that he came before us, down to the present moment, we have uniformly testified in their favour, and assigned, indeed, our high sense of their value as the chief ground of the bitterness with which we resented their perversion. That perversion, however, is now far more visible than their original dignity; and while we collect the fragments, it is impossible not to lament the ruins from which we are condemned to pick them."

His "bitterness" was really due to three causes. In the first place, his hard practical sense was offended at the poet's reckless throwing away of his chances. It would have been so easy, he thought, to avoid useless and irritating blunders, such as Wordsworth's announcement, in the Preface, that this poem of 420 pages in sumptuous quarto was only a Portion of a Poem, belonging to the second part of a long and laborious Work, which was to consist of three parts. Such an announcement was an affront to weak humanity, a defiance of time itself. On this subject Jeffrey simply had the frankness to say what everybody must think.

His taste, also, somewhat narrowed, it is true, by the pressure of an extremely busy endeavour to determine from month to month what was most worth while in current literature, revolted against Wordsworth's prolixity.

And, again, he objected on principle, and in accordance with the whole system of his thinking, to what may be crudely termed Wordsworth's democracy. The "lowness" of Wordsworth's characters seemed to him incongruous with the sentiments they express and the language they use. "Why," he demanded, "should Mr. Wordsworth have made his hero a superannuated Pedlar? What but the most wretched and provoking perversity of taste and judgment could induce anyone to place his chosen advocate of wisdom and virtue in

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so absurd and fantastic a condition? Did Mr. Wordsworth really imagine that his favourite doctrines were likely to gain anything in point of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgle about tape or brass sleeve-buttons?" He recurs more than once, with partisan bitterness, to the charge that Wordsworth indulged "an affected passion for simplicity and humble life."

There is also a fourth clause in the indictment, not to be taken too seriously, as it was no doubt drawn with an elegant pretence of ignorance. It is that the poem is too "mystical," whatever that may mean, and that the speculative passages in which this error floats are incomprehensible. With very slight trouble Jeffrey might have seen that the purpose of these passages was to accomplish that reconciliation between natural religion and orthodox theology which he, of all men, would have been among the first to applaud. If the editor of *The Edinburgh Review* really did not, as he asserted, form the slightest guess as to the meaning of the following passage (Book IV., lines 68-76), this shows how slow Englishmen—and even Scotsmen—were to acquaint themselves with the terms and conceptions of Kant:

> Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
> And passions hold a fluctuating seat:
> But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
> And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
> Duty exists;—immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

And another allegation besides would seem to have been made carelessly, and to have been scarcely meant, namely, that the whole substance of Wordsworth's work was infected with "a puerile ambition of singularity." A certain undertone of respect which makes itself heard perforce now and then, even in this article, prevents one from believing that Jeffrey thought Wordsworth a pretender.

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On the whole the review was intended to rebuke the poet and put the public on its guard against him. It began brutally: "This will never do. It bears no doubt the stamp of the author's heart and fancy; but, unfortunately, not half so visibly as that of his peculiar system." The article entered at once into odious personalities, designed to make the poet ridiculous in the eyes of readers and to deprive him of courage and ambition. He is reproached for his "long habits of seclusion," his "solitary musings." But ere long the critic shows, in a single paragraph, what a petty conception he has of poetry itself. "Moral and religious enthusiasm," he asserts, are "but dangerous inspirers of poetry." Here, we may imagine, Wordsworth ceased to trouble himself about what might follow.

Even if only from a commercial point of view, Jeffrey's hostility to Wordsworth was costly. Making every allowance for exaggeration, the extent of the injury may be inferred from the following statement by Coleridge, in a letter to Daniel Stuart, postmarked July 9, 1825:

"Such has been the influence of the Edinburgh Review that in all Edinburgh not a single copy of Wordsworth's works or of any part of them could be procured a few months ago. The only copy Irving [*i.e.*, Edward Irving, the preacher] saw in Scotland belonged to a poor weaver at Paisley, who prized them next to his Bible, and had all the Lyrical Ballads by heart—a fact which would cut Jeffrey's conscience to the bone if he had any. I give you my honour that Jeffrey himself told me that *he* was himself an enthusiastic admirer of Wordsworth's poetry, but it was necessary that a Review should have a character."

The demands on Wordsworth's purse were particularly heavy in these years, and Dorothy was almost justified in her exaggeration when she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, April 11, 1815, urging her to do something to hasten the sale of "The Excursion": "That is all we care about. If this edition were once sold, I should not have a moment's anxiety afterwards." She begs Mrs. Clarkson to write a review of "The White Doe"

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in *The Philanthropist*, and thus secure it an audience among Quakers and abolitionists.

Wordsworth had made the same suggestion already, saying: "I mention The Philanthropist because it circulates a good deal among Quakers, who are wealthy and fond of *instructive* books. Besides, though I am a professed admirer of the Church of England, I hope that my religious sentiments will not be offensive to *them*." On August 15 Dorothy laments the slow sale of her brother's poems. They will never sell, she thinks, till he is laid in the grave, but he feels no mortification, and she is confident of his powers and intentions. "His writings will live, will comfort the afflicted, and animate the happy to purer happiness, when we and our little ones are all forgotten."*

It is well not to attach much importance to De Quincey's malicious chatter, but the following report of a conversation with him, in 1854,† is one of many proofs that Wordsworth's character was unhappily affected by Jeffrey's ruthless assaults:

"Wordsworth thanked God there was only one man in England he would go out of his way to see, namely, Belzoni [a gigantic acrobat]. De Quincey remarked on the beggarly idea of renown Wordsworth entertained in regarding as nothing all the intellect and worth of England as compared with a man seven feet high, who could walk with a living pyramid on his shoulders. Wordsworth's scorn of public opinion was excessive. It was not superciliousness, but an almost inhuman scorn. This was a natural reaction of the abuse he suffered early. He (De Quincey) had, he said, on one occasion to show the honours of the Vale of Grasmere to a French visitor, and was greatly diverted by Wordsworth's and the Frenchman's almost unconcealed contempt for each other. Wordsworth's feeling was on account of the French Revolution, and from a neglect and scorn of strangers in general, and the Frenchman's feeling arose from his having derived all his ideas of Wordsworth

* These quotations are from unpublished letters to Mrs. Clarkson, in the British Museum.

† John Ritchie Findlay's "Personal Recollections of Thomas De Quincey," p. 48.

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from the Edinburgh Review, and regarding him as the very imbecile of literature."

In this connection De Quincey is reported as saying "The chief weakness of The Excursion lies in the commonplace nature of its religious sentiment—nothing higher than what you might hear intelligent old women talk on such subjects."

The October number of *The Quarterly Review*, containing Lamb's article on "The Excursion," probably did not come out much before the end of the year 1814.* Lamb's tone is infinitely more modest than Jeffrey's, and, strange to say, he almost wholly refrains from playfulness, which may be owing to his being awed by the poem or the opportunity, or, more probably, to the fact that Gifford obliterated every trace of the "irresponsibilities" of Elia. Here is his account of Wordsworth's "mysticism," which Jeffrey pretended not to understand:

"In him, *faith*, in friendly alliance and conjunction with the religion of his country, appears to have grown up, fostered by meditation and lonely communions with Nature—an internal principle of lofty consciousness, which stamps upon his opinions and sentiments (we were almost going to say) the character of an expanded and generous Quakerism."

The Fourth Book Lamb considers the most valuable portion of the poem.

"For moral grandeur; for wide scope of thought, and a long train of lofty imagery, for tender personal appeals; and a *versification*, which we feel we ought to notice, but feel it also so involved in the poetry, that we can hardly mention it as a distinct excellence; it stands without competition among our didactic and descriptive verse. The general tendency of the argument (which we might almost affirm to be the leading moral of the poem) is to abate the pride of the calculating understanding and to reinstate the *imagination* and the *affections* in those seats from which modern

* Lamb writes to Wordsworth, December 28: "That Review you speak of, I am only sorry it did not appear last month. . . . It is the first Review I ever did." The records of *The Quarterly Review* show that Gifford claimed part authorship of the article.

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philosophy has laboured but too successfully to expel them."

"The causes," Lamb asserts," which have prevented the poetry of Mr. Wordsworth from attaining its full share of popularity, are to be found in the boldness and originality of his genius." A writer who would be popular "must not think or feel too deeply."

"If he has had the fortune to be bred in the midst of the most magnificent objects of creation, he must not have given away his heart to them; or if he have, he must conceal his love, or not carry his expressions of it beyond that point of rapture which the occasional tourist thinks it not overstepping decorum to betray, or the limit which that gentlemanly spy on Nature, the picturesque traveller, has vouchsafed to countenance. He must do this, or be content to be thought an enthusiast.

"If from living among simple mountaineers, from a daily intercourse with them, not upon the footing of a patron, but in the character of an equal, he has detected, or imagines that he has detected, through the cloudy medium of their unlettered discourse, thoughts and apprehensions not vulgar; traits of patience and constancy, love unwearied, and heroic endurance, not unfit (as he may judge) to be made the subject of verse, he will be deemed a man of perverted genius by the philanthropist, who, conceiving of the peasantry of his country only as objects of a pecuniary sympathy, starts at finding them elevated to a level of humanity with himself, having their own loves, enmities, cravings, aspirations, etc., as much beyond his faculty to believe, as his beneficence to supply. . . . If from a familiar observation of the ways of children, and much more from a retrospect of his own mind when a child, he has gathered more reverential notions of that state than fall to the lot of ordinary observers, and, escaping from the dissonant wranglings of men, has tuned his lyre, though but for occasional harmonies, to the milder utterance of that soft age,—his verses shall be censured as infantile by critics who confound poetry 'having children for its subject' with poetry that is 'childish,' and who, having themselves perhaps never been *children*, never having possessed the tenderness and docility of that age, know not what the soul of a child is—how apprehensive! how imaginative! how religious!"

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Wordsworth was in after-years extremely sensitive to the charge that his early poetry had a pantheistic tendency. One of the first traces of this objection is found in a long article on " The Excursion " by James Montgomery, in *The Eclectic Review* for January, 1815. Commenting on this, Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in his Diary, January 3, 1815:

" It is a highly encomiastic article, rendering ample justice to the poetical talents of the author, but raising a doubt as to the religious character of the poem. It is insinuated that Nature is a sort of God throughout, and, consistently with the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the reviewer, the lamentable error of representating a love of Nature as a sort of purifying state of mind, and the study of Nature as a sanctifying process, is emphatically pointed out."*

The author of the article is distressed because " the terrors of the Lord and the consolations of His Spirit " are not invoked to convert the Solitary. He is sorry for Wordsworth's own sake, and for the thousands in future generations who may be his readers, that he has not dealt more with Sin and Redemption through the blood of Christ. Genius, the writer shrilly mantains, is not debased by evangelical notions. " Mr. Wordsworth," he declares, " *could* so sing of Christ's kingdom, if it has indeed come into his heart, as would for ever set the question at rest; and we hope that in the promised prelude, or sequel, to this volume, he *will*." After nine solid pages in which Mr. Wordsworth is held threateningly up against an awful background of Calvinistic theology, and readers are warned that no allowance will be made for all his sovereignty of genius, but that his very excellence will be as dung, if he conform not to the dismal scheme, the poem is at length approached. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that

* Robinson had already, on December 19, reported a conversation with Flaxman on the subject of a supposed piece of impiety in the fragment prefixed to " The Excursion ": " Flaxman took umbrage at some mystical expressions in the fragment in the Preface, in which Wordsworth talks of *seeing Jehovah unalarmed*. ' If my brother had written that,' said Flaxman, ' I should say, Burn it.' "

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this article reveals more correctly than Jeffrey's or Hazlitt's or Lamb's the attitude of mind with which the average middle-class British or American reader approached unfamiliar works of art one hundred years ago. The remaining seventeen pages of the essay are divided between breathless admiration and a fanatical recoil from the heresies supposed to lurk in the poem. If only it contained " an honest exposition of the *Christian Faith*," it would be " the most perfect strain of moral poetry in the English, or perhaps in any language. But wanting this ' one thing '—this ' one thing needful'—all the glories of philosophy, though displayed with unparalleled splendour, vanish like a florid sunset, leaving the forlorn and disconsolate sinner wandering in darkness, and *still* crying, ' What shall I do to be saved ?' "

If anyone is tempted to be impatient with Wordsworth for showing in " The Excursion " a tendency towards the commonplace, easy-going type of orthodoxy—and the charge would be ill-founded indeed—a perusal of this article will increase his respect for the poet's breadth of nature, his sanity, his fidelity to the laws of fine art. Montgomery makes two sensible remarks:

" Crabbe," he says, " gives low life with all its meanness and misery; Cowper paints it with sprightly freedom as the familiar friend of the Poor; Wordsworth casts over it a pensive hue of thought that softens its asperity and heightens its charm without diminishing its verisimilitude." And again he says, most truly: " His powers are peculiar. His descriptions, his figures, his similes, and his reflections, are all homogeneous and *unique*. He writes almost as if he had never read, and while he unperceivingly avails himself of the experience and wisdom of others, he seems to utter only his own observations from his own knowledge. Corresponding with this originality of mind, he has invented a style more intellectual than that of any of his contemporaries, and in contradiction to his own theory."

Wordsworth spent part of November, 1814, at Lowther Castle, the seat of the Earl of Lonsdale, where, to his sister's regret, he missed seeing the Duke of Devonshire,

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who had expressed a desire to see him. The duke, she said, " had just returned from Ireland, where he had made The Excursion the companion of his tour and had been greatly pleased with it "*

Two handsomely printed volumes, with two execrable frontispieces, representing pictures by Sir George Beaumont, appeared in March, 1815, with the title " Poems by William Wordsworth, including Lyrical Ballads and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author, with additional poems, a new preface, and a supplementary essay." Longman was the publisher, and the book was dedicated to Sir George Beaumont. The supplementary essay is printed at the end of Volume One, and the Preface to the second edition of " Lyrical Ballads " is stuffed in, as if to fill space, at the end of Volume Two. The new preface, however, cannot compare in weight of matter or eloquence of style with the old one. The author writes, here, no longer as a prophet, but as a professor. His pedantic distinctions and dry categories are enough to have made any sensitive reader put the volume on the top shelf of his library with old textbooks of rhetoric and æsthetics, thereby doing sad injustice to himself and to the many lovely poems thus disagreeably introduced. Wordsworth would have made a most unattractive pedagogue; he was too sure of himself, too unrelenting to others. Abandoned by ordinary good sense to the guidance of pedantry, he divided his poems, in this edition, according to that inexplicable system of his own making which has done as much as anything else to repel honest readers, the apology therefor, set down in the Preface, being no explanation at all, but a further provocation to wonder.

Here, too, is found his famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination, a distinction not imperceptible in a general way to any careful observer. He brusquely reverses the older definitions, based, it is true, on etymology rather than usage, and insists that Fancy is the visualizing faculty, and Imagination the faculty

* " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 61. The date given is 1815, but should be 1814.

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whereby values are imputed to objects to which they do not, in fact, belong. He maintains, with the violence of one who is defending a statement he knows cannot be proved, that there is a tremendous difference in kind between Imagination and Fancy. Poor Fancy comes by many a hard knock, while her sublime sister receives all the poet's homage; yet in the end he fails to prove that there is more than a difference of intensity and seriousness between them.* Having illustrated the higher gift with examples from Milton, Shakespeare, and HIMSELF, he thus proceeds:

"And if, bearing in mind the many poets distinguished by this prime quality, whose names I omit to mention; yet, justified by a recollection of the insults which the Ignorant, the Incapable, and the Presumptuous have heaped upon these and my other writings, I may be permitted to anticipate the judgment of posterity upon myself; I shall declare (censurable, I grant, if the notoriety of the fact above stated does not justify me) that I have given, in these unfavourable times, evidence of exertions of this faculty upon its worthiest objects, the external universe, the moral and religious sentiments of Man, his natural affections, and his acquired passions; which have the same ennobling tendency as the productions of men, in this kind, worthy to be held in undying remembrance."

There is no "affectation of simplicity" in that sentence. He has caught the style not only, but the temper, of the seventeenth-century pamphleteers. This lecture on his own superior powers is brightened a little by his mention of Charles Lamb as "one of my most esteemed Friends," and of Coleridge as "my friend Mr. Coleridge," and of Dorothy as "a Female Friend." But like a child who has begun the day wrong, and is doomed to

* What, after all, could be better than Charles Lamb's definition of imagination (in his essay "On the Genius of Hogarth"), as "drawing all things to one, making things animate and inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects with their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect."

Dr. K. Lienemann ("Die Belesenheit von William Wordsworth," Berlin, 1908) endeavours to show that Wordsworth obtained his distinction between imagination and fancy from Jean Paul Richter, through Coleridge, or else from Lamb's essay "On the Genius of Hogarth."

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be horrid till bedtime, he can do nothing quite gracious or natural in this wretched Preface; his expression of regret at the necessity of separating his compositions "from some beautiful Poems of Mr. Coleridge" is not half cordial enough; why could he not have used a little rhetoric, Milton's or the heart's, on such a good occasion? And his allusion to Dorothy's pleasing little verses is rather high and mighty:

"Three short pieces (now first published) are the work of a Female Friend; and the Reader, to whom they may be acceptable, is indebted to me for his pleasure; if anyone regard them with dislike, or be disposed to condemn them, let the censure fall upon him, who, trusting in his own sense of their merit and their fitness for the place which they occupy, *extorted* them from the Authoress."*

That Wordsworth set great store by the system of classification observed in these volumes is evident from his having clung to it in subsequent editions. It is supposed to carry the reader's mind over the whole of life, from childhood to the grave, and beyond. But another method conflicts with this, for some of the poems are grouped according to the faculties of the mind to which their creation was chiefly attributed, and both plans are abandoned in order to permit the introduction of poems on the naming of places, sonnets dedicated to liberty and—sonnets! The scheme was thrust upon Wordsworth by some tricksy sprite for his undoing. It has nothing to recommend it, and has been wisely dropped by some editors in favour of a chronological order. His divisions, however, are as follows: Volume One contains Poems referring to the period of Childhood, Juvenile Pieces, Poems founded on the Affections, Poems of the Fancy, and Poems of the Imagination; Volume Two contains Poems of the Imagination (continued), Poems proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection, Miscellaneous Sonnets, Sonnets dedicated to Liberty (in two parts: I., those published in 1807; and II., from the year 1807 to 1813), Poems on the Naming of Places,

* They are "Address to a Child," "The Mother's Return," and "The Cottager to her Infant."

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Inscriptions, Poems referring to the Period of Old Age, Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems, and the Ode on Intimations, etc. In the table of contents are given the dates of composition and of first publication. Of "An Evening Walk," "Descriptive Sketches," and "The Female Vagrant," only extracts are reprinted, these fragments giving a very imperfect idea of the originals.

Many textual changes were made in subsequent editions, but the two volumes of 1815, together with "The Excursion," set Wordsworth fairly before the world. Here was enough poetry of the highest order to insure immortality, and he knew it. He was aware also of the ample justice done him by several of the greatest critics in Britain—by Coleridge, the greatest of all, and Lamb, the pioneer of fame. Even carping judges like Hazlitt appreciated his merits. De Quincey, whose own style was certain to keep his name alive, was his disciple. Southey proclaimed him the first of living poets. The sound mind of Sir Walter Scott had pronounced in his favour. He had a fairly wide and growing circle of readers. Why should he have cared whether the larger public came round to him a few years sooner or later? This is the question that rises as we read the Essay supplementary to the Preface.

His theme at the beginning of this extraordinary production is the hostility of his "Adversaries." In reality he had not an enemy in the world. His hunger for acknowledgment is unpleasant to contemplate. He cannot restrain his impatience; his tone is harsh and peevish. Placed midway in the stream of his delightful poems, like a toll-gate across a river, the essay seems to challenge payment of praise.

"By this time," it begins, "I trust that the judicious Reader, who has now first become acquainted with these poems, is persuaded that a very senseless outcry has been raised against them and their Author. Casually, and very rarely only, do I see any periodical publication, except a daily newspaper, but I am not wholly unacquainted with the spirit in which my most active and persevering adversaries have maintained their hos-

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tility; nor with the impudent falsehoods and base artifices to which they have had recourse. These, as implying a consciousness on their parts that attacks honestly and fairly conducted would be unavailing, could not but have been regarded by me with triumph; had they been accompanied with such display of talents and information as might give weight to the opinions of the Writers, whether favourable or unfavourable. But the ignorance of those who have chosen to stand forth as my enemies, as far as I am acquainted with their enmity, has unfortunately been still more gross than their disingenuousness, and their incompetence more flagrant than their malice."

But enough of this. There is half a page more, and then begins a wonderful Defence of Poetry, worthy of all praise. What if the language be a pile of thunder-laden clouds, full of sullen fire? The clouds are pregnant with meaning, and the lightning shows the way of truth. His purpose is to demonstrate that true poetry, though never without a witness in the world, this witness being the voice of the people, not "the public," may for long years pass undistinguished from the more showy sort which youth accepts through inexperience, and later life through negligence or habit In a passage of astonishing acumen he narrows the number of capable critics down to those persons who, "never having suffered their youthful love of poetry to remit much of its force, have applied to the consideration of the laws of this art the best power of their understandings." The difficulty, he contends, is that poetry is not, like science, capable of being tested by objective reactions. His view is impressionistic, for he says: "The appropriate business of poetry (which, nevertheless, if genuine is as permanent as pure science), her appropriate employment, her privilege and her *duty*, is to treat of things not as they *are*, but as they *appear;* not as they exist in themselves, but as they *seem* to exist to the *senses* and to the *passions*."

There can be little doubt that he has in mind Hazlitt and Jeffrey, when he strikes with his thunderbolts

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those critics who ought to be competent, but are not, because their understanding has pledged its credit to uphold error:

"In this class are contained Censors, who, if they be pleased with what is good, are pleased with it only by imperfect glimpses and upon false principles; who, should they generalize rightly to a certain point, are sure to suffer for it in the end;—who, if they stumble upon a sound rule, are fettered by misapplying it, or by straining it too far; being incapable of perceiving when it ought to yield to one of higher order. In it are found Critics too petulant to be passive to a genuine Poet, and too feeble to grapple with him; men who take upon them to report of the course which *he* holds whom they are utterly unable to accompany,—confounded if he turn quick upon the wing, dismayed if he soar steadily into 'the region,' men of palsied imaginations and indurated hearts, in whose minds all healthy action is languid, who therefore feed as the many direct them, or, with the many, are greedy after vicious provocatives; judges whose censure is auspicious and whose praise ominous!"

In such fuliginous and fulgurous torrents does his wrath descend.

Good critics being so few, it is not surprising, he says, if "works in the higher departments of poetry" have been neglected in comparison with numerous productions which "have blazed into popularity and have passed away, leaving scarcely a trace behind them." The only recompense for those who deplore this fact is in "perceiving that there are select Spirits for whom it is ordained that their fame shall be in the world an existence like that of virtue, which owes its being to the struggle it makes and its vigour to the enemies whom it provokes—a vivacious quality ever doomed to meet with opposition, and still triumphing over it, and, from the nature of its dominion, incapable of being brought to the sad conclusion of Alexander, when he wept that there were no more worlds for him to conquer."

Having thus demonstrated and eloquently proclaimed

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the *a priori* unlikelihood that a work of merit should be highly approved by critics in the lifetime of its author, he gives an illuminating retrospect of the poetical literature of Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, showing that the greatest works were, in most cases, not well received. The subject is treated with originality and power. He is as dogmatic as Dr. Johnson, and far more penetrating. The rugosities of his style alternate fitfully with passages of classical smoothness, which charm the agitated senses. We feel that we are being dragged through the history of English poetry by an inspired madman, who sees clearly in the dark. It is impossible to over-estimate the amount of reading, reflection, and personality, represented by this essay. Some of the judgments appear arbitrary or harsh, but I believe that in every case they are absolutely sound. Remembering the fame of Scott, and that he and Wordsworth were friends, we realize that it required some character to say, in reference to ballad poetry: "I esteem the genius of Dr. Percy in this kind of writing superior to that of any other man by whom, in modern times, it has been cultivated." Wordsworth had taken sufficient account of foreign poetry to be able to estimate Germany's indebtedness to the "Reliques." Of this collection he says: "For our own Country, its Poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it. I do not think that there is an able Writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the Reliques; I know that it is so with my friends; and, for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own." Only a painter, or a poet who, like Wordsworth, was accustomed to write with his eye on the object, could have applied the following test to Macpherson's "Ossian": "In nature everything is distinct, yet nothing defined into absolute independent singleness. In Macpherson's work it is exactly the reverse: everything (that is not stolen) is in this manner defined, insulated, dislocated, deadened —yet nothing distinct.' As if to avenge himself on all

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Scotsmen at once, he goes out of his course to mention Adam Smith as " the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced."

He wishes there were a better word than " taste " for expressing the quality of appreciative judgment, " Taste " originally signifying only a passive receiving of impressions, whereas there is something active, aggressive, and dynamic in that function of the mind when properly exerted. He quotes a remark long since made to him by Coleridge, " that every Author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed." Even ancient authors, of acknowledged authority, " have to call forth and communicate *power* " in their readers before they can be enjoyed; and " this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original Writer, at his first appearance in the world." This is Wordsworth's defence of his own course. " Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before; of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit, of human nature."

This essay, in its three parts, first its attack upon uninspired and unsympathetic criticism, secondly its original review of English poetry since the Renaissance, and thirdly its vindication of the claims of originality in poetry, is one of the most important polemical documents in support of the Romantic Movement. Its vigour and eloquence are more commendable than its temper. The rule of the world is that an author shall not reply to his critics. It may be a bad rule. Certainly, however, we feel that an author shows poor taste if he quotes freely and complacently his own works.

H. C. Robinson, in whom the caution of a man of the world was combined with the enthusiasm of a disciple, confessed these misgiving to his Diary on April 16, 1815, as follows:

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" In the evening, in my chambers, enjoyed looking over Wordsworth's new edition of his poems. The supplement to his preface I wish he had left unwritten. His reproaches of the bad taste of the times will be ascribed to merely personal feelings and to disappointment. But his manly avowal of his sense of his own poetic merit I by no means censure. His preface contains subtle remarks on poetry, but they are not clear. . . . His classification of his poems displeases me from an obvious fault, that it is partly subjective and partly objective."

There are several places in the Essay Supplementary where Coleridge's views and achievements might have been mentioned with propriety. The omission of his praise is indeed noticeable. Free from jealousy or personal ambition as he usually was, Coleridge felt this, and expressed his disappointment in a letter to William Mudford,* as follows:

" Mr. Wordsworth, for whose fame I had felt and fought with an ardour that amounted to absolute self-oblivion, and to which I owe mainly the rancour of the Edinburgh clan, and (far more injurious to me) the coldness, neglect, and equivocal compliments of *The Quarterly Review*, has affirmed in print that a German critic *first* taught us to think correctly concerning Shakespeare. . . . There is not one single principle in Schlegel's work (which is not an admitted drawback from its merits) that was not established and applied in detail by me."

Of previously unpublished poems the edition of 1815 does not contain many. Except the thirty-two fresh Sonnets dedicated to Liberty, the new pieces would not have been enough to fill a very slender volume, and, of these, only " Laodamia " bears witness to any broadening of sympathy or advance in technique. To glance at the table of contents, with the dates of the poems appended, is to be startled with the conviction that somewhere between 1807 and 1815 the poet's

* Written about 1818. It is No. 12 of the " Letters hitherto uncollected by Samuel Taylor Coleridge," edited by Colonel W. F. Prideaux, 1913; printed for private circulation. I quote from a copy in the British Museum.

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development had been arrested. This conviction is strengthened when we contrast the natural fire of the twenty-six political sonnets published in 1807 and the bigness of their subjects with the artificial heat and far-fetched topics of the thirty-two new ones. Notwithstanding Charles Lamb's cordial approval of "Yarrow Visited," it is not worthy of a place beside its tender, wistful, magical predecessor, with which it compares even less favourably than broad noon to dewy, expectant dawn. Sonnets on the poet's domestic affairs, translations from Michael Angelo and Chiabrera, inscriptions for urns and seats in Sir George Beaumont's grounds, verses on one of Sir George's paintings, two or three other sonnets, and "The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale," which is little more than a parody on "The Reverie of Poor Susan," make up the rest of the novelties.

Early in May, 1815,* the poet and Mrs. Wordsworth, accompanied by Sara Hutchinson, went to London. There were business difficulties with Richard Wordsworth, whose death, without his having signed certain papers, would have deprived Dorothy of her small patrimony. There was also a natural desire to see how the recent publications were being received. Coleridge was living now at Calne, near Bristol. Robinson and the Lambs welcomed the visitors with joy. The former wrote in his Diary on May 7:

"On returning from a walk to Shooter's Hill, I found a card from Wordsworth, and running to Lamb's I found Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth there. After sitting half an hour with them, I accompanied them to their lodgings, near Cavendish Square. Mrs. Wordsworth appears to be a mild and amiable woman, not so lively or animated as Miss Wordsworth, but, like her, devoted to the poet."

Two days later he took tea with them at the Lambs'. Of the conversation he says:

* Professor Knight and Mr. Thomas Hutchinson both say April, but there is a letter from Wordsworth dated Rydal Mount, April 25, 1815 (see "Letters," Vol. II., p. 57), and another dated Kendal, May 3; and it is evident also from H. C. Robinson's Diary and Lamb's correspondence that the Wordsworths arrived in London on or shortly before May 7.

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"Wordsworth, in answer to the common reproach that his sensibility is excited by objects which produce no effect on others, admits the fact, and is proud of it. He says that he cannot be accused of being insensible to the real concerns of life. He does not waste his feelings on unworthy objects, for he is alive to the actual interests of society. . . . The poet himself, as Hazlitt has well observed, has a pride in deriving no aid from his subject. It is the mere power which he is conscious of exerting in which he delights, not the production of a work in which men rejoice on account of the sympathies and sensibilities it excites in them. Hence he does not much esteem his Laodamia, as it belongs to the inferior class of poems founded on the affections. In this, as in other peculiarities of Wordsworth, there is a German bent in his mind."

On May 23 Robinson met the Wordsworths again at a large tea-party at the Lambs', and pronounced Miss Hutchinson "a lively, sensible little woman." On May 23 Robinson, Mary Lamb, and the Wordsworths had front places at Drury Lane Theatre, and saw Kean in "Richard II." On May 28 Robinson dined at Collier's with a party assembled to see Wordsworth. The master pronounced unfavourable judgments on Byron, and "blamed Crabbe for his unpoetic mode of considering human nature and society." On June 15 Robinson spent the forenoon with Wordsworth, who spoke of having called on Leigh Hunt, and of having heard from him about an article of Hazlitt's in the last Sunday's *Examiner*. Hazlitt had accused Southey and Wordsworth of apostasy from their old political faith. Hunt disclaimed the article. The attack occurs in a paragraph on Milton's consistency; ***he*** had not written paltry sonnets on the "Royal fortitude," like the sonnet to the king "in the Last Edition of the Works of a modern Poet." This was an allusion to Wordsworth's sonnet on King George, composed in 1813 and published in 1815. The critic had also hinted that Wordsworth had been guided by base motives in omitting from his collection "The Female Vagrant," his old poem on the miseries inflicted on the poor by

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war.* We have here the germ of that tradition upon which Browning's "Lost Leader" was more or less consciously founded, for Browning admitted that he had the older poet's defection vaguely in mind, at least.

On June 18 Robinson breakfasted at Wordsworth's, and stayed till two o'clock, B. R. Haydon, the painter, being present. He makes no further mention of the poet in London, at this time, and by the 28th the latter is in the north country once more, rejoicing in the news of Waterloo, with awe and sorrow for the fallen. In Haydon's "Autobiography," edited by Tom Taylor, London, 1853, there is an entry in the painter's Diary erroneously dated *April* 13, 1815.† Haydon relates that he was making a cast the day before of the poet's face:

"He bore it like a philosopher. John Scott was to meet him at breakfast, and just as he came in the plaster was put on. Wordsworth was sitting in the other room in my dressing-gown, with his hands folded, sedate, solemn, and still. I stepped in to Scott, and told him as a curiosity to take a peep, that he might say the first sight he ever had of so great a poet was in this stage towards immortality. Wordsworth," he adds, "delighted us by his bursts of inspiration. At one time he shook us both in explaining the principles of his system, his views of man, and his object in writing. . . . His purity of heart, his kindness, his soundness of principle, his information, his knowledge, and the intense and eager feelings with which he pours forth all he knows, affect, interest, and enchant one. I do not know anyone I would be so inclined to worship as a purified being."

Under date of May 23 he says:

* See *The Examiner* for June 11, 1815. A fragment of the poem was indeed republished, but Hazlitt was right if he meant that its sting was drawn.

† It should be *May*, as a comparison with the context before and after shows. This is probably what misled Professor Knight and Mr. Thomas Hutchinson into the statement that Wordsworth went to London in April.

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" Breakfasted with Wordsworth, and spent a delightful two hours. Speaking of Burke, Fox, and Pitt, he said: ' You always went from Burke with your mind filled; from Fox with your feelings excited; and from Pitt with wonder at his having had the power to make the worse appear the better reason.' Pitt, he said, preferred power to principle."

Wordsworth doubtless owed his acquaintance with Haydon to Sir George Beaumont.

Somehow, one who believes that Wordsworth was the greatest poet of his age, one who is jealous of his reputation and enamoured of his nobility, cannot help regretting the scenes in which we find him basking in the praises of his admirers, complacently judging the merits and especially the demerits of his contemporaries, and inflicting his " system " upon spell-bound listeners. We feel like bidding him

Shine, poet, in thy place, and be content.

We expect in a poet something of the " madman," and quite rightly too, for the real poetic madness is a diviner wisdom than the sageness of old men and philosophers.

Leigh Hunt was wicked enough to get some amusement out of Wordsworth, as is evident from his own account of the call mentioned above, which came about through the following circumstances: In *The Reflector*, a quarterly magazine of literature and politics, projected by Hunt's brother and edited by Hunt himself with the collaboration of Lamb, Dyer, and other old Christ's Hospital boys, there had appeared a versified *jeu d'esprit* called " The Feast of the Poets." Hunt was its author. He says of it:*

" I offended all the critics of the old or French school, by objecting to the monotony of Pope's versification, and all the critics of the new or German school, by laughing at Wordsworth, with whose writings I was then unacquainted, except through the medium of his deriders. On reading him for myself, I became such an admirer, that Lord Byron accused me of making him popular upon town. I had not very well pleased Lord

* " Autobiography of Leigh Hunt," London, 1850, Vol. I., p. 103.

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Byron himself, by counting him inferior to Wordsworth. Indeed, I offended almost everybody whom I noticed."

Hunt's weekly paper, *The Examiner*, contained on March 22, 1812, a libel on the Prince Regent, in consequence of which he and his brother, the proprietors, were found guilty and sentenced each to two years' imprisonment. "The Lambs," he says, "came to comfort me in all weathers, hail or sunshine, in daylight and in darkness, even in the dreadful frost and snow of the beginning of 1814." Hazlitt, Byron, Charles Cowden Clarke the Shakespearian scholar, and Jeremy Bentham were also among his visitors.

On his release from prison, in February, 1815, Hunt and his family went into lodgings in the Edgware Road, and here in May he had, as he says,*

"the honour of a visit from Mr. Wordsworth. He came to thank me for the zeal I had shown in advocating the cause of his genius. I had the pleasure of showing him his book on my shelves by the side of Milton; a sight which must have been the more agreeable, inasmuch as the visit was unexpected. He favoured me, in return, with giving his opinion of some of the poets, his contemporaries, who would assuredly not have paid him a visit on the same grounds on which he was pleased to honour myself. Nor do I believe that, from that day to this, he thought it becoming in him to reciprocate the least part of any benefit which a word in good season may have done for him. Lord Byron, in resentment for my having called him the 'prince of the bards of his time,' would not allow him to be even the one-eyed monarch of the blind. He said he was the 'blind monarch of the one-eyed.' I must still differ with his lordship on that point; but I must own that, after all which I have seen and read, posterity, in my opinion, will differ not a little with one person respecting the amount of merit to be ascribed to Mr. Wordsworth; though who that one person is, I shall leave the reader to discover.

"Mr. Wordsworth, whom Mr. Hazlitt designated as one that would have had the wide circle of his humanities made still wider, and a good deal more pleasant, by

* "Autobiography," I. 163.

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dividing a little more of his time between his lakes in Westmorland and the hotels of the metropolis, had a dignified manner, with a deep and roughish but not unpleasing voice, and an exalted mode of speaking. He had a habit of keeping his left hand in the bosom of his waistcoat; and in this attitude, except when he turned round to take one of the subjects of his criticism from the shelves (for his contemporaries were there also), he sat dealing forth his eloquent but hardly catholic judgments. In his 'father's house' there were not 'many mansions.' He was as sceptical on the merits of all kinds of poetry but one, as Richardson was on those of the novels of Fielding."

Even before the volumes of 1815 appeared, Wordsworth's theory of poetry and manner of composition had been cleverly ridiculed in an extremely witty satire. A writer in *The Eclectic Review* for November, 1814, remarks that in "Modern Parnassus, or the New Art of Poetry," "Mr. Wordsworth is arraigned for the absurdities of his poetical theory." "Arraigned" is a little too strong a word for the occasion. "Modern Parnassus"* is a delicious little *jeu d'esprit* in heroic couplets, with a mock-serious preface, in which the anonymous author (an Oxford fellow, apparently) declares that, since the canons of criticism have from the earliest ages been determined from the practice of poets, he waives all claim to the invention of the new poetic art, merely taking to himself "the credit of collecting and methodizing the principles and maxims which lie scattered here and there throughout the numerous successful poems of the present remarkable æra." The preface to Mr. Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" has the disadvantage of being written in prose. The lively author, who writes with perfectly good temper, then proceeds, in five cantos, to show how Southey, Scott, Coleridge, and Byron have reversed the rules of Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Vida, Boileau, and Pope. Of Wordsworth, he says:

> When Nature, true to Fancy's strong controul,
> Spreads all her stores before the raptur'd soul,
> * * * * * *

* London, 1814. In the British Museum.

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> Oh censure not his choice, if, free from pride,
> He takes the small and lays the vast aside;
> Nature is Nature still, wherever seen,
> In an owl's hooting, or an ass's mien.
> From ev'ry theme alike, or grand or low,
> As leaves on trees, unnumber'd thoughts will grow.

And thus for several pages he gently makes fun of the poet.

"The White Doe of Rylstone, or The Fate of The Nortons," was published by Longman in May, 1815, during its author's stay in London. It appeared in a handsome quarto. Facing the title-page is an engraving of a painting by Sir George Beaumont, which represents a scene in the poem. There are a brief Advertisement, as reprinted in subsequent editions, the sonnet beginning "Weak is the will of Man, his judgment blind," a quotation from Lord Bacon, and a poetical epistle to Mrs. Wordsworth, dated Rydal Mount, April 20, 1815. The passage from Bacon is to the effect that "Man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human Nature in itself could not obtain," just as a dog, strengthened in heart by reliance upon a man, receives a confidence above its own natural power. This is a singularly apt condensation of the moral of the tale. Then follows the poem itself, with the verses on "The Force of Prayer, or The Founding of Bolton Priory," and the Notes.

As we have seen, the Wordsworths went home before the end of June. Charles Lamb wrote to them on August 9:*

"Mary and I felt quite queer after your taking leave (you W. W.) of us in St. Giles's. We wished we had seen more of you, but felt we had scarce been sufficiently acknowledging for the share we had enjoyed of your company. We felt as if we had not been enough *expressive* of our pleasure, but our manners *both* are a little too much on this side of too-much-cordiality. We want presence of mind and presence of heart."

* E. V. Lucas, "Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 470.

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On August 20 Lamb writes to Sara Hutchinson* that Coleridge, he hears, is busy on a work of great importance, the title of which is to be "Autobiographia Literaria."

The London friends were only less annoyed than Wordsworth himself by an article on his "Poems" and "The White Doe of Rylstone" in *The Quarterly Review* for October, 1815.† It contains a languid and unintelligent discussion of his theory of poetry, which is condemned, although the greatness of his achievement is admitted. When the writer quotes Horace or Quintilian, he seems to think he has settled the matter. He sets up as a monitor, and concludes: "Mr. Wordsworth has something to learn, and a good deal to unlearn; whether he will endeavour to do either at our suggestion is, perhaps, more than doubtful; he seems to be *monitoribus asper*, in a degree which is really unreasonable; however, this is his business; all we can say is, that if he is not now, or should not be hereafter, a favourite with the public, he can have nobody to blame but himself."

In Dorothy's letters to Mrs. Clarkson we have seen how deeply the family at Rydal Mount were agitated by the political news from France in the spring and summer of 1815. Our present knowledge of the way in which their domestic interests were bound up with the destiny of France throws fresh light upon this subject. Their anxiety was personal as well as general. The violence, not to say bitterness, of Wordsworth's feeling against Englishmen who even indirectly gave countenance to the Napoleonic tradition can now be more readily understood. It is now easier to perceive why he turned against the whole French nation, deeming it fickle and dangerous. This change of attitude towards a people whom he had once admired involved a complete readjustment of his views of man and society.

* E. V. Lucas, "Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 473.

† The writer, as is shown by the private records of Mr. Murray, was William Rowe Lyall, afterwards Archdeacon of Maidstone and Dean of Canterbury.

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Being negative and reactionary, his new purposes failed to inspire him with poetic impulse; his life as a creator of joy and hope and encouragement was broken. Not only is this evident in the poetry he subsequently wrote, but, still more unfortunately, he attempted to alter the meaning of works already written and not yet published.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

RETREAT AND SURRENDER

MANY considerations demanded that after the battle of Waterloo Wordsworth should devote his powers to stemming the tide of reaction. A people not naturally lustful for military glory had turned aside from peaceful pursuits to take part in a twenty years' war, and had been victorious. The nation was now absolutely safe from foreign danger. It had nothing further to gain from keeping up a great armament or fostering a warlike spirit. On the contrary, its industries being prostrate, its debt enormous, its taxation high and ill-apportioned, its working class impoverished and starving, its land-owners and capitalists in possession of undue advantage, its schools, colleges, scientific societies, and charities unsettled, what it needed was internal reform. Public law, as must always be the case in time of war, had been tampered with by the authorities. The liberties of the people had been infringed. The progress of democracy had been checked. It seemed as if political and social idealists had been rebuked by some divine voice, and to the thunder of destiny meaner tongues did not fail to add their taunting chorus. It was a second Restoration, without the personal corruption and the public glitter.

Wordsworth, as we have had abundant opportunity to observe, deemed himself, and hitherto justly deemed himself, the Milton of his age. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that his chief interest was political. The peculiarities of his art are due to political principles, or at least to a world-view of which a certain theory of human values is an essential element. In the present crisis it was his duty to speak on behalf of the highest

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national good, having first applied his unrivalled powers of sympathetic analysis to the discovery of that wherein this good consisted. And he did speak. We should be doing him a grave injustice by assuming that he did not think before he spoke; but his study of the situation was as vain as the voice was feeble. He quite failed to see where the real danger lay, and he trembled at phantoms. He rejoiced with the rejoicing multitude, when humble searching of heart would have better become a wise man. In fact, he was at this point and for the rest of his life no seer; the vision of England's destiny was denied to him; henceforth he seldom made a political prediction which time has verified, or which shows him to have appreciated the forces that were moulding the future.

We have already seen how numerous and subtle were the processes of decline in moral vigour which had been going on in Wordsworth's character for twelve or fourteen years. The result is distressingly apparent in the poems he wrote to celebrate the fall of Napoleon. He composed in 1816 no less than four odes, two shorter pieces in the manner of the ode, and five sonnets, on this subject. It was a legitimate subject for English poetry at that time, but not for boastful pæans.

The feeling displayed in Wordsworth's verses is intemperate, inhuman, and irreligious. He assumes that the Almighty is on England's side. We forgive the vanquished when they console themselves with such faith, but of the victor we are inclined to ask, "What would be your opinion if you were beaten?" As if to be avenged for her betrayal in the region of morals, Truth refused to show herself even in the sphere of art, and these verses are among the least natural that can be found in the whole range of English literature. They are a denial of all those principles of poetic diction the establishment of which is an honour to Wordsworth's insight and their maintenance a credit to his courage. The keynote of artificiality is struck in the first words of the "Thanksgiving Ode," "Hail, orient Conqueror of gloomy Night!" We have "Pierian Sisters," "sage

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Mnemosyne," the "Olympian summit," a hierarchy of angels and seraphs, and much besides of the old repertory which men are now agreed to call pre-Wordsworthian. Many lines which would have been appropriate enough in Spenser's day or Milton's or Dryden's savour of affectation when found in the pages of Wordsworth. Some of the stanzas, owing to their relationship to poetry of an older date and their remoteness from the language of the author's own time, read like splendid school exercises. This is not to say that there are not one or two fine things, even in a poem which claims the Spirit of Wisdom, Love, and Progress as a tribal Deity. It is no excuse to reply that the ancient Jews made the same assertion. In a stanza which ends with the banal blasphemy,

> Thy presence turns the scale of doubtful fight,
> Tremendous God of battles, Lord of Hosts!

we find such lively images as these:

> He springs the hushed Volcano's mine,
> He puts the Earthquake on her still design.

But on the whole we may say that the time was already past when a great poet, writing on War, could, without defalcation of genius, express merely or mainly a sense of pride and joy. The feelings of compunction, perplexity, and horror, which Wordsworth and Coleridge manifested in their earlier references to the subject, are much more in accord with the modern conscience.*

In the preface to his "Thanksgiving Ode," Wordsworth showed, indeed, that he had been troubled with scruples. He met an imagined rebuke with a pre-

* I write these lines in September, 1914, three days after the destruction of Reims cathedral, believing that no free and enlightened conscience can regard war without misgiving and detestation. Englishmen and Americans who are now execrating the cynical philosophy of Bernhardi and Nietzsche should, to be consistent, reserve a little of their wrath even for Wordsworth, when he says, in the preface to his "Thanksgiving Ode": "The nation would err grievously if she suffered the abuse which other states have made of military power to prevent her from perceiving that no people ever was or can be independent, free, or secure, much less great, in any sane application of the word, without martial propensities and an assiduous cultivation of military virtues."

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diction which proved false, when he wrote, in reference to the distresses of the poor: "If the author has given way to exultation, unchecked by these distresses, it might be sufficient to protect him from a charge of insensibility, should he state his own belief that these sufferings will be transitory." Comforting himself with this easy assumption, which the history of the next thirty years in England was to deny, he goes on to advocate the maintenance of a large army, and especially of schools for instruction in military science.

This poem, with several others of the same character, was published by Longman in 1816, under the following title: "Thanksgiving Ode, January 18, 1816, with other Short Pieces, chiefly relating to recent public events, by William Wordsworth." The Advertisement, or preface, is dated March 18, 1816. The little octavo volume also contains the "Ode composed in January, 1816," eight sonnets, verses "In Recollection of the Expedition of the French into Russia" ("Humanity delighting to behold"), the ode "Who rises on the Banks of Seine," and "Elegiac Verses" (afterwards named "Invocation to the Earth"). Almost all these pieces were composed in February. The chill of winter remains in them to this day.

Wordsworth shared with Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Southey, Hogg, and John Wilson the distinction of being parodied in a volume of verse entitled "The Poetic Mirror, or the Living Bards of Britain," published by Longman in 1816. Passages called "The Flying Taylor," "James Rigg," and "The Stranger," are given as extracts from "The Recluse." Of these a writer* in *The Quarterly Review* for July ventured to say: "It is here only that the author assumes, every now and then, the legitimate line of parody by applying the high-sounding blank verse, the intricate combinations of thought and affected phrases of Mr. Wordsworth, to objects still more ludicrously low than Mr. Wordsworth himself, daring as he is in this way, ventures to do." We are forced by this continual clamour against

* J. W. Croker, as Mr. Murray's records show.

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"lowness" to wonder if there was something peculiar in the English habit of mind, of that time, which thus made it a rule of literary criticism that fictitious characters should be of a certain rank in society. There was little of this kind of snobbery in Germany when her poets and romancers stooped from the castle to the cottage; and Leopardi was soon to sing unreproved about Italian sempstresses and cobblers. No one in America, so far as I am aware, felt obliged to rebuke the manly Cooper for the lowness of his heroes and ingenuous "females."

In April, 1816, Longman printed for Wordsworth "A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns, occasioned by an intended republication of the Account of the Life of Burns, by Dr. Currie; and of the Selection made by him from his Letters." It is a pamphlet of thirty-seven pages, in the form of a letter addressed to James Gray, Esq., of Edinburgh, dated January, 1816, and in fact was originally a private communication, although the possibility of its being made public was in the writer's mind from the first. He hoped to dissuade Gilbert Burns from republishing Dr. Currie's "Life" of his brother, and to encourage him to write a short sketch himself instead. In expressing his indignation and sorrow at the defamation of Burns's character in Dr. Currie's indiscreet revelations and puritanical comments, he breaks into a strain of eloquence, which is simpler and more touching than anything else in his prose works. By the delicacy and yet the manly frankness of all his references to Burns's failings, by his exquisitely chosen terms of praise for Burns's genius and the noble elements of his character, by avoiding the use of those trite and blundering excuses which are an insult to Burns's memory, he shows in every line how he reverenced his brother poet. The letter is a perfect prose counterpart to that tender and glowing elegy which no lover of Burns can read without tears of gratitude. It is worth noting that Wordsworth, who was unbending and often harsh in judging the works of his contemporaries, is always considerate, genial, and even generous,

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in what he has to say of Burns. I think he was touched by the thought of his own relationship with Burns, in time, place, and mission, and of how great a difference in their fortunes had been caused by accident. He was solicitous that Burns's children, "who remembered their father probably with the tenderest affection, and whose opening minds, as their years advanced, would become conscious of so many reasons for admiring him," should be spared the recital of his failings and misery.

The letter also contains a thoughtful passage on the privileges and duties of biographers. The limitations he seeks to impose would decimate our libraries. He under-estimates the moral value of detailed and frank records of human lives, as tending to expand and correct our views of life, and especially of our own place in life. But most of his scruples are absolutely proper, and the general spirit of respect for the dead as well as the living which he enjoins is one that should animate every biographer. The letter, which is an almost perfect thing of its kind, ends unfortunately with a fierce tirade against *The Edinburgh* reviewer, which contrasts harshly with the tone of liberality that makes its earlier part so delightful.*

One would have thought that this letter might have found favour in Scotland, where the tone of Dr. Currie's "Life" of Burns was much regretted. But the new Scottish frigate, *Blackwood's*, cruising about on its maiden voyage, fell foul of the intruder. In the third number of that magazine, June, 1817, appeared an article "transmitted from England," objecting to all Wordsworth's proposals and opinions, ridiculing his "pompous" and "oracular" style, and denouncing him as "officious" and "egotistical." His qualifications for giving advice are denied: "He has never lived in Scotland—he knows nothing about Burns—he very imperfectly understands the language in which Burns

* In the catalogue of Wordsworth's library, as offered for sale in 1859, were Burns's "Poems" in two volumes, 1793, with a Marginal Glossary, of which a note, dated June 6, 1847, says: "In the handwriting of my dear Sister, done long ago"; and also Burns's "Works, with an Account of his Life," by Dr. Currie, 4 vols., 1800.

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writes—he has not even read those publications which are supposed to be unjust to his memory." The real *animus* of this article, as perhaps of Wordsworth's pamphlet, was the hostility between him and Jeffrey. "We shall not disgrace our pages with any portion of the low and vulgar abuse," says the writer, "which the enraged poet heaps upon the Editor of the Edinburgh Review. . . . He has unquestionably written some fine verses in his day; but, with the exception of some poetical genius, he is, in all respects, immeasurably inferior, as an intellectual being, to the distinguished individual whom he so foolishly libels." Wordsworth was too awkward, tactless, and inelastic for controversy, and at first one feels that his antagonist has got the upper hand of him. The charge of egoism and pomposity especially seems true. But glancing again at the "Letter," one is, notwithstanding, able to rejoice in the strong-mindedness and good sense of almost all it says about Burns and the ethics of biography. We simply have to put up with Wordsworth's egoism, however much we may glory in his intellectual power.

Feelings of this mixed nature animated a writer who replied to Wordsworth's assailant, in the October number of *Blackwood's*, 1817. He maintains that Wordsworth has done great service to Burns's memory, that his motives are excellent and his statements correct. He stands up for Jeffrey, however, in the following judicious passage:

"I declare it to be my conviction, in direct opposition to that of Mr. Wordsworth, that Mr. Jeffrey is the best Professional Critic we now have, and that, so far from showing gross incapacity when writing of works of original genius, he has never, in one instance, withheld the praise of originality when it was due. Of Mr. Wordsworth himself he has uniformly written in terms of far loftier commendation than any other contemporary Critic, and has placed him at all times in the first rank of Genius."

And of Wordsworth himself he says:

"He has brought about a *revolution* in Poetry; and a revolution can no more be brought about in Poetry than

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in the Constitution, without the destruction or injury of many excellent and time-hallowed establishments. . . . Posterity will hail him as a regenerator and a creator."

The matter was not allowed to rest. In the November number, one who claimed to have been an intimate friend of Burns attacked Wordsworth as an author scarcely known in Scotland and peculiarly unfitted to appreciate the Scottish poet. One or two of his phrases, though scurrilous, may be quoted here, because they represent what a number of ill-informed and captious persons still think, or imagine they think, about Wordsworth. He speaks of him as "a retired, pensive, egotistical *collector of stamps*, one who has no notion of that merry, hearty life that Burns delighted in."

"How," he exclaims, "can a melancholy, sighing, half-parson sort of gentleman, who lives in a small circle of old maids and sonneteers, and drinks tea now and then with the solemn Laureate, have any sympathy with the free and jolly dispositions of one who spent his evenings in drinking whisky punch at mason lodges with Matthew Henderson and David Lapraik?"

The strange poem "Dion" was written in 1816.* It is not at all in any "manner" shown elsewhere by Wordsworth, and would probably never have been recognized as his if it had been published anonymously. It does not, like "Laodamia," recall the spirit of Greek religion or the Greek conception of beauty. Rather does it remind one of the noble and austere English poets who, we know, were his favourite reading—of Drayton and Daniel and Marvell. He found his subject in Plutarch, but his language is like theirs, less warm and sensuous than Milton's, harder to the ear than Spenser's, and in no wise that of even the most exalted "common" speech. There are at least two serious organic faults in the poem: Dion's crime is not clearly related or sufficiently emphasized; and the introduction of his vision, while necessarily sudden, makes too abrupt a transition from the general to the specific. That

* Some editions have 1814, but see "Memoirs," II. 64.

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Wordsworth at this time, when he elsewhere manifests no misgivings as to the righteousness of the military life in itself, should have written this negative comment on his " Character of the Happy Warrior," proves that his principles were still not quite set in their new mould. Perhaps this moral difficulty was one cause of the obscurity that remains in this poem notwithstanding his extremely careful revision of the manuscript and the printed editions. Its haunting mystery is due less to its verbal darkness than to its troubled moral atmosphere.

We learn from Robinson's Diary, May 28, 1816, that Godwin, arch disturber of the complacent, had lately spent a night at Wordsworth's house, and seemed to have left him " with feelings of strong political difference." " It was this alone, I believe," he adds, " which kept them aloof from each other." Robinson himself, that comfortable and accommodating soul, says, " I have learned to bear with the intolerance of others when I understand it." He too had rejoiced in the overthrow of Napoleon, because he believed him to be an enemy of liberty, but now he perceived that with the restoration of the old system, the old cares and anxieties had revived also.

" I am sorry," he writes, " that Wordsworth cannot change with the times. He ought, I think, now to exhort our Government to economy, and to represent the dangers of a thoughtless return to all that was in existence twenty-five years ago. Of the integrity of Wordsworth I have no doubt, and of his genius I have an unbounded admiration, but I doubt the discretion and wisdom of his latest political writings."

In September, 1816, Robinson himself made a tour of the Lakes, visiting De Quincey, Southey, and Wordsworth.

" It was a serious gratification," he wrote, " to behold so great and so good a man as Wordsworth in the bosom of his family enjoying those comforts which are apparent to the eye. He has two sons and a daughter surviving. They appear to be amiable children, and, adding to these external blessings the *mind* of the man, he may

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justly be considered as one of the most enviable of mankind. The injustice of the public towards him in regard to the appreciation of his works, he is sensible of. But he is aware that, though the great body of readers—the admirers of Lord Byron, for instance—cannot and ought not to be his admirers too, still he is not without his fame. And he has that expectation of posthumous renown which has cheered many a poet who has had less legitimate claims to it, and whose expectations have not been disappointed."

Southey, whose emotions were more superficially excitable, he found in a condition of unreasonable alarm, afraid of a popular uprising.

"I found his opinions concerning the state and prospects of this country most gloomy. He considers the Government seriously endangered by the writings of Cobbett, and still more by the Examiner. Jacobinism he deems more an object of terror than at the commencement of the French Revolution, from the difficulties arising out of the financial embarrassments. He says that he thinks there will be a convulsion in three years! I was more scandalized by his opinions concerning the press than by any other doctrine. He would have transportation the punishment for a seditious libel!!! I ought to add, however, that I am convinced Southey is an honest alarmist. I did not dispute any point with him."*

Robinson accompanied Wordsworth to Cockermouth on a business errand rendered necessary by the death of the poet's elder brother, Richard,† and on the way

* Southey and Wordsworth were by no means alone in their panic. There was a general failure to realize the horrible condition of the very poor in Great Britain and Ireland, and their feeble efforts to obtain recognition and relief were misunderstood. The game laws were enforced ferociously. Public meetings were turned into riots and roughly dispersed. Publications were suppressed. Writings against the government, the courts, and the church, were treated as seditious matter. Great scandal attended the trials of Watson, Preston, Hooper, Thistlethwaite, Hone, Williams, and others. The introduction of machinery caused loss of employment to many thousands, and was forcibly opposed. In some trials the letter of the law was used, against the spirit of justice, to obtain conviction.

† Richard Wordsworth died at Lambeth, where he was cared for, in his last illness, by his brother Christopher.

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made note of his conversation, which he deemed eloquent. One point is of interest as showing that, in the opinion of Robinson, who was widely read in German philosophy, Wordsworth was not acquainted with it: "He represented, . . . much as, unknown to him, the German philosophers have done, that by the imagination the mere fact is exhibited as connected with that infinity without which there is no poetry."

The year 1817 passed quietly for Wordsworth, though it brought an event which contributed, and always will contribute, enormously to his fame. This was the publication of Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria." Wordsworth appears to have remained at home until December. The half-dozen short poems of the year include one of the poorest and one of the best which he was now capable of writing. The former, entitled "Vernal Ode," is excessively artificial, and contains many vices of style. These are, however, antiquated vices, and not the new evils of gushing diction and loose structure in which his contemporaries, Byron, Moore, and to some extent Keats, were indulging. It must be admitted, too, that the last stanza of this poem contains nine lines of magical beauty and deep imaginative insight, where he says of the bee:

> Observe each wing! a tiny van!
> The structure of her laden thigh,
> How fragile! yet of ancestry
> Mysteriously remote and high;
> High as the imperial front of man;
> The roseate bloom on woman's cheek;
> The soaring eagle's curved beak;
> The white plumes of the floating swan;
> Old as the tiger's paw, the lion's mane."

The other poem is entitled "The Pass of Kirkstone." It is composed with almost as much simplicity and plain strength as the best pieces of earlier date. No one who has read it can make the arduous journey from Ambleside to Patterdale without seeing the "inverted arch," the "aspiring road," through Wordsworth's eyes, or hearing,

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as he described them, the coarse rushes "sigh forth their ancient melodies."*

Robinson mentions that Wordsworth, his wife, and Miss Hutchinson were in London in December, 1817. He met them at a dinner at which Charles Lamb and Coleridge and his son Hartley were present. The amiable and indefatigable lion-hunter called on them at the Rev. Dr. Christopher Wordsworth's, in Lambeth, and "spent a couple of hours with them very agreeably." The poet had brought manuscripts of new poems with him and was inclined to print one or two small volumes. On December 30, Robinson spent the evening at Lamb's, where he "found a large party collected round the two poets, but Coleridge had the larger number." Hazlitt was not alone in charging Wordsworth with deserting the principles of his younger days, and doubtless there was much controversy on this topic. The attitude of Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth was the more noticeable because of its contrast with the outspoken radicalism of Byron and Shelley. On November 6, Robinson had written:

"I went to Godwin's. Mr. Shelley was there. His youth, and a resemblance to Southey, particularly in his voice, raised a pleasing impression, which was not altogether destroyed by his conversation, though it is vehement, and arrogant, and intolerant. He was very abusive towards Southey, whom he spoke of as having sold himself to the Court. And this he maintained with the usual party slang. His pension and his Laureateship, his early zeal and his recent virulence, are the proofs of gross corruption. On every topic but that of violent party feeling, the friends of Southey are under no difficulty in defending him. Shelley spoke of Wordsworth with less bitterness, but with an insinuation of his insincerity."

* I had the good fortune, in the summer of 1914, to cross the pass in company with Mr. Charles Walmsley, of Ambleside, whose delight in the correspondence between the poem and the scene it so truthfully depicts it was a pleasure to witness. He told me that in Wordsworth's day the road was unfenced, although flocks of sheep were even then

> Imprisoned 'mid the formal props
> Of restless ownership.

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It was probably much more than an insinuation, for Shelley had not hesitated, in a sonnet "To Wordsworth," published with "Alastor," in 1816, to make the charge in plain terms. In his journals for 1814 and 1815,* he recorded the fact that he had read "The Excursion." Whether the disapproval expressed in the sonnet was due to anything he found in that poem, or merely to the talk against Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in Leigh Hunt's circle, can only be guessed. The sonnet is as follows:

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar;
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

Shelley had been at Chestnut Cottage about six weeks before he met Southey. The inhabitant of Chestnut Cottage thought monstrous small things of his neighbour at Greta Hall, while distance—and ignorance of the facts—lent enchantment to the name of Wordsworth, as the following extract from a letter will show:†

"Southey has changed. I shall see him soon, and I shall reproach him for his tergiversation.—He to whom Bigotry, Tyranny, Law was hateful, has become the votary of these idols in a form the most disgusting.—The Church of England, its Hell and all, has become the subject of his panegyric; the war in Spain, that prodigal waste of human blood to aggrandize the fame of statesmen, is his delight. The Constitution of England—with its Wellesley, its Paget, and its Prince—are

* See Mrs. Shelley's Note on the Early Poems, on p. 524 of the Oxford edition of Shelley's "Complete Poetical Works," 1907.

† To Elizabeth Hitchener, December 15, 1811. "The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley," edited by Roger Ingpen, 1912, p. 197.

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inflated with the prostituted exertions of his Pen. I feel a sickening distrust when I see all that I had considered good, great, or imitable, fall around me into the gulf of error. But we will struggle on its brink to the last, and if compelled to fall—we shall have at all events the consolation of knowing that we *have* struggled with a nature that is bad, and that this nature, [not ?] the imbecility of our proper cowardice, has involved us in the ignominy of defeat. Wordsworth (a *quondam* associate of Southey) yet retains the integrity of his independence, but his poverty is such that he is frequently obliged to beg for a shirt to his back."

On January 7, 1812, he wrote: "Wordsworth and Coleridge I have yet to see." But he had met Southey, whom he pronounced narrow-minded, "corrupted by the world, contaminated by custom."

One of Southey's political adversaries had gone so far as to reprint his poem "Wat Tyler," written more than twenty years before, in order to prove him a renegade from his old opinions. This outrage was much discussed and drew from Coleridge a defence of his brother-in-law, in *The Courier*. Wordsworth, in turn, declared that the charge against Southey, "of being too obsequious to the throne, the aristocracy, and persons in office or in place, the charge of being a *tool of power*," was "a most false and foul accusation, for a more disinterested and honourable man than Robert Southey does not live."*

On December 28, 1817, the artist Haydon gave a dinner, to which, as Keats wished to know Wordsworth, both the poets were invited, besides Charles Lamb and Monkhouse, a kinsman of Mrs. Wordsworth. After dinner other friends came in, and probably it was as gay an evening as Wordsworth ever spent. The following extracts are from Haydon's account:†

"On December 28th the immortal dinner came off in my painting room, with Jerusalem‡ towering up above

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 103.

† "Life of B. R. Haydon," by Tom Taylor.

‡ Haydon's picture of Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem. Wordsworth and Keats had sat as models for minor figures in this large painting. Hazlitt, Voltaire, and Sir Isaac Newton were also represented. The painting is now in the Art Museum, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to which it was removed from the Roman Catholic cathedral.

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WORDSWORTH IN 1820

Detail from Haydon's "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem." The figure in the centre is Wordsworth. Immediately above him is Keats. Behind Wordsworth are Voltaire and Newton.

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us as a background. Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to,—on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. 'Well,' said Lamb, 'here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too.' . . . In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth, and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

"When we retired to tea we found the comptroller. In introducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the comptroller looked down, looked up, and said to Wordsworth, 'Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?' Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the comptroller, Lamb, who was dozing by the fire, turned round and said, 'Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?' 'No, sir, I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not.' 'Oh,' said Lamb, 'then you are a silly fellow.' 'Charles! my dear Charles!' said Wordsworth, but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

"After an awful pause the comptroller said, 'Don't you think Newton a great genius?' I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, 'Who is this?' Lamb got up, and, taking a candle, said, 'Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?' He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the comptroller, he chaunted—

> Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
> Went to bed with his breeches on.

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The man in office, finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chuckling anticipation of assured victory, 'I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr. Wordsworth.' 'With me, sir?' said Wordsworth. 'Not that I remember.' 'Don't you, sir? I am a comptroller of stamps.' There was a dead silence;—the comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply Lamb sung out—

Hey diddle diddle
The cat and the fiddle.

'My dear Charles!' said Wordsworth.

Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John,

chaunted Lamb, and then rising, exclaimed, 'Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs!' Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door, and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed, and tried to get Lamb away. We went back, but the comptroller was irreconcileable. We soothed and smiled and asked him to supper. He stayed, though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good humour, and no ill effects followed.

'"All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room, and calling at intervals, 'Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more.'

"'It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats's eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time. All our fun was within bounds. Not a word passed that an apostle might not have listened to. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon

that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."

The commissioner of stamps was named Kingston. One would suppose from Haydon's gossiping account

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that poets were quite out of this man's line. But he is mentioned more than once in Keats's letters, and appears to have belonged to the coterie of wits which included the authors of "Rejected Addresses." Though in the distribution of stamps he was no doubt a very important person, Keats called him a "thing."* In spite of its unhappy beginning, Wordsworth and Kingston kept up their acquaintance, for Keats says, in a letter of January 5, 1818: "On Saturday I called on Wordsworth before he went to Kingston's, and was surprised to find him with a stiff collar. I saw his spouse, and I think his daughter." Dilke, in his annotated copy of Lord Houghton's "Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats," says: "When Keats first called on Wordsworth he was kept waiting for a long time, and when Wordsworth entered he was in full flower; knee-breeches, silk stockings, etc., and in a great hurry as he was going to dine with one of the Commissioners of Stamps."

It was not to be expected that Wordsworth should like Leigh Hunt. And if Hunt had not been a good-natured man he might, though unjustly, have held Wordsworth remotely responsible for a series of odious articles in *Blackwood's* for October and November, 1817. This was the first occasion, I believe, of the use of the term "Cockney School of Poetry." Hunt is held up to scorn as a plebeian: "All the great poets of our country have been men of some rank in society, and there is no vulgarity in any of their writings; but Mr. Hunt cannot utter a dedication, or even a note, without betraying the Shibboleth of low birth and low habits. . . . How such a profligate creature as Mr. Hunt can pretend to be an admirer of Mr. Wordsworth, is to us a thing altogether inexplicable." Wonder is expressed that this "paltry cockney newspaper scribbler had the assurance to address one of the most nobly-born of English Patricians, and one of the first geniuses whom the world ever produced, as 'My dear Byron.'" These are a few of the more temperate and "genteel" expres-

* See Keats's letter to his brothers, December 28, 1817.

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sions in the articles. Most of what remains is incredibly vile. If Hunt thought Wordsworth belonged to the caste that entertained such foul and injurious opinions, he was most chivalrous to be willing to receive him. And I believe Wordsworth called on Hunt for the express purpose of showing his dignified contempt for the tribe of reviewers.

We are doubly glad Wordsworth took this step, because in future numbers (July and August, 1818, April, 1819) the mad writer in *Blackwood's* continued to hold him up as a model of Christian propriety, and to denounce Hunt as a defender and *perhaps a practitioner*, of incest, he being the author, forsooth, of "The Story of Rimini"! Hunt was a Jacobin, an incendiary, he had "a want of respect for the Christian religion," "a contempt for kingly power," and an indecent mode of attacking the government of his country! Wordsworth, on the other hand, in these articles and another series on "The Lake School of Poetry," July and December, 1818, is praised for the "beautiful echoes of Christian tenderness and sorrow," even in the poems he wrote at Alfoxden. It is interesting to note that in the last-mentioned article he is called "the Rousseau of the present times," and warned, if he would escape Rousseau's fate, to avoid the intellectual stir of city life.

By far the most notable event in 1817, as far as Wordsworth is concerned, was the publication of Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria." This occurred about March. The book, as a whole, is an incomplete medley of several compositions, but its outstanding feature, and that which gives it a unique place among Coleridge's prose works, is the famous discussion of Wordsworth's poems and their underlying principles. Not only is it an impassioned and most eloquent example of English criticism, but there never has been a more subtle, or, I venture to say, a more philosophical treatise on poetry. Nor in the annals of literature is there record of one great author doing more to establish the fame of another, than Coleridge here did to establish

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Wordsworth's fame; for the profit of all the depth, fineness, and beauty of this treatise falls at Wordsworth's feet. He is the example cited; he is the beneficiary of the interest created. In writing as he did, Coleridge effaced himself, forgot that he too was a poet, refused to claim even his share of the credit for plans and methods which he and Wordsworth had worked out together. Yet one looks in vain through Wordsworth's letters and the many conversations with him that are on record, for any sign that he appreciated either the tribute paid to his genius or the intrinsic merit of Coleridge's performance. Even when Hazlitt, in *The Edinburgh Review* for August, 1817, made a fierce attack upon the book, and *Blackwood's Magazine* for October followed with another equally hostile and more atrociously personal, Wordsworth, so far as is known, gave no sign.

Hazlitt's article is shallow and smart. His imitator—indeed his plagiarist—in *Blackwood's* descends to vile abuse. It is hard to understand how the spirited, genial, profound, and at the same time childlike writings of Coleridge could have aroused such bitterness as both of these reviewers, and especially the latter, exhibit. One would have expected Coleridge's naïveté to draw forth a smile even where his depth was undreamt of. He is charged with anger, scorn, egotism, and *ignorance!* Hazlitt's criticism is lame and unintelligent; evidently a piece of hack-work. The other man, borrowing his ideas from Hazlitt, but deriving his ferocity from a silly nationalism, appears enraged that a person whom Jeffrey had once and for all settled should emerge again to public view. "The truth is," he exclaims, "that Mr. Coleridge is but an obscure name in English literature. In London he is well known in literary society and justly admired for his extraordinary loquacity. . . . In Scotland few know or care anything about him."

This cruel diatribe drew forth a letter, printed in *Blackwood's* for December, 1817, from one, who, though professing to have met neither Coleridge nor his friends, was justly indignant at such gross unfairness. Needless

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to say, all these articles were anonymous, though Jeffrey placed his own initials under a note appended to Hazlitt's essay. The manners of reviewers in those days were as low as the average of their ability was high. They assumed infallibility and treated authorship as an evidence of criminal intent. The atmosphere of literary circles was in this way kept lively and exhilarating for those who could stand it.

A word dropped by Dorothy, on another subject, shows perhaps that her brother did not quite relish the "Biographia Literaria." Writing to Mrs. Clarkson on April 13, in reference to Coleridge's defence of Southey against the charge of apostasy, she says: "Coleridge, for instance, has taken up the cudgels; and of injudicious defenders he is surely the master leader. . . . He does nothing in simplicity, and his praise is to me quite disgusting—his praise of the 'man' Southey in contradistinction to the 'boy' who wrote 'Wat Tyler.'"

We might indulge the hope that this unpleasant passage was only an expression of temporary petulance were it not for the following passage in Coleridge's letter of December 2, 1818, to Thomas Allsop:

"I have loved with enthusiastic self-oblivion those who have been so well pleased that I should, year after year, flow with a hundred nameless rills into *their* main stream, that they could find nothing but cold praise and effective discouragement of every attempt of mine to roll onward in a distinct current of my own; who *admitted* that the 'Ancient Mariner,' the 'Christabel,' the 'Remorse,' and some pages of The Friend were not without merit, but were abundantly anxious to acquit their judgments of any blindness to the very numerous defects. Yet they *knew* that to *praise*, as mere praise, I was characteristically, almost constitutionally, indifferent. In sympathy alone I found at once nourishment and stimulus; and for sympathy *alone* did my heart crave. They knew, too, how long and faithfully I had acted on the maxim never to admit the *faults* of a work of genius to those who denied or were incapable of feeling and understanding the *beauties;* not from wilful partiality, but as well knowing that in *saying* truth I should, to such critics, convey falsehood. If in

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one instance, in my literary life, I have appeared to deviate from this rule, first, it was not till the fame of the writer (which I had been for fourteen years successively toiling like a second Ali to build up) had been established; and, secondly and chiefly, with the purpose and, I may safely add, with the effect of rescuing the necessary task from malignant defamers, and in order to set forth the excellences and the trifling proportion which the defects bore to the excellences."*

Those who think of Wordsworth only as a serene intelligence, indulging himself, aloof from worldly cares, in the enjoyment of "nature" and the contemplation of ideals, will be relieved, or shocked, according to their notion of propriety, by discovering that for at least one whole year, 1818, he was engaged in practical politics. Moreover, some of the work he performed was rather elementary and, to a modern judgment, reprehensible—namely, manipulating the local franchise so as to increase his party's vote. He served, in fact, as Lord Lonsdale's lieutenant, which the following extracts from letters will show. The first is to his lordship, under date of February 18:

"I wish much for your opinion as to the propriety of precautionary measures in augmenting the numbers of trustworthy freeholders. An offer has been made to me of an estate which would divide into *twelve* small freeholds; and, with your Lordship's sanction, I would purchase it, being able to reckon on as many persons—gentlemen, my friends and relations—who could be depended upon. If it be found that your adversaries adopt the plan of increasing the numbers in their interest, it will be necessary to keep pace with them, and I don't think that the matter can be safely left to casualties."†

This is what would be termed nowadays "pernicious activity" in an office-holder. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the "plan" differs from a proposal to buy votes. The familiar defence is made—namely, that the other side is busy too, and that the eleven new votes would be of the "right kind." Whether with the

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 696.

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 111.

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earl's money or his own, we are not told, he carried out his scheme in part, and writes to a correspondent on December 8:*

"Our opponents are very active in procuring freeholds, so much so that we must exert ourselves with the view of preserving the balance. This necessity is much to be regretted,—but it to me is so obvious that I purchased the other day a freehold estate in Langdale, which will divide into seven parts. Of these five are already disposed of, one to Mr. Gee, and the other four to my own relations."

After all, the fact that such transactions appear questionable to us is no warrant for accusing Wordsworth of improper conduct; we should, rather, feel encouraged that the political experience of a century has been in so far educative as to make us now think dishonourable what was done in 1818 by so conscientious a man. The really distressing thing is to see one who was well fitted to be a guide in political philosophy refusing to read the signs of the times and writing such opinions as the following:†

"What else but the stability and might of a large estate, with proportional influence in the House of Commons, can counterbalance the democratic activity of the wealthy, commercial, and manufacturing districts? It appears to a superficial observer, warm from contemplating the theory of the Constitution, that the political power of the great landholders ought, by every true lover of his country, to be strenuously resisted; but I would ask a well-intentioned native of Westmorland or Cumberland, who had fallen into this mistake, if he could point to any arrangement by which Jacobinism can be frustrated except by the existence of large estates continued from generation to generation in particular families and parliamentary power in proportion." And again, "I cannot but be of opinion that the feudal power yet surviving in England is eminently serviceable in counteracting the popular tendency to reform, which would unavoidably lead to peculations."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 116.

† From letters to Lord Lonsdale, January 21 and November 28, 1818, in "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 111 and 116.

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The house of Lowther had long held both seats in Parliament for the county of Westmorland. The idea of contesting them had scarcely entered anybody's head. The Tory candidate in 1818 was William Lowther, eldest son of Wordsworth's patron, the second Earl of Lonsdale. To the disgust and scandal of the gentry, the magistracy, and the clergy of that very conservative region, the Whigs set up Henry Brougham, most versatile of politicians, and a man wholly unmindful of other people's prejudices. He had already made a name for himself in the House of Commons, and had been charged, in the recent session, with advocating freedom of suffrage for all payers of direct taxes, and Annual Parliaments. He was, therefore, a dangerous man. Wordsworth's pen was engaged to overthrow this champion of pernicious doctrine. Gratitude towards the Lowther family and a sense of dependence upon persons so powerful to affect his well-being and that of his children, together with knowledge that Brougham had for many years been one of the leading spirits in *The Edinburgh Review*, may have entered into Wordsworth's motives. But the principles he expressed were, of course, his own, acquired by severe thinking and held with a grip of iron. It was his original intention to contribute a series of letters to the Kendal *Chronicle*, and he did, indeed, have one letter printed in that newspaper. Another appeared in the Carlisle *Patriot*.

Dissatisfied with this mode of publication, he put forth, at Kendal, a pamphlet of seventy-eight pages, entitled "Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmorland." What had appeared in the *Chronicle* and the *Patriot* was here repeated and developed. The Advertisement is dated March 26, 1818, the notice To the Reader, April 4, 1818, and the second Address, February 24, 1818. The reader is informed that the vital principle of the Opposition ostensibly headed by the new candidate "is at enmity with the bonds by which society is held together and Government maintained." The Whigs have countenanced the doctrine

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of the rights of man. They disapprove—terrible charge!—of the arrangements made by the Holy Alliance. "Are they pleased that inheritances have been restored, and that legislative governments have been re-established, on the Continent? And do they grieve when those re-established governments act unworthily of the favour which Providence has shown them?" The party must cease "to court the discontented and to league itself with men who are athirst for innovation." The house of Lowther, by its wealth and prominence, is well fitted to represent the county. It has always secured legislative favours for local interests. The Opposition are not English: "neither the religion, the laws, the morals, the manners, nor the literature of the country, especially as contrasted with those of France, were prized by the leaders of the party as they deserved." There is scarcely to be found a distinguished clergyman among their friends!

Stripped of all temporary and local accidents, how familiar this all sounds! It is the line of argument followed by those, everywhere and in all times, who defend the "machine," the "boss," and "things as they are" in politics. The resemblance deepens when he breaks into an invective against Reformers: "The independence which they boast of despises habit and time-honoured forms of subordination; it consists in breaking old ties upon new temptations; in casting off the modest garb of private obligation to strut about in the glittering armour of public virtue, in sacrificing, with jacobinical infatuation, the near to the remote, and preferring to what has been known and tried, that which has no distinct existence, even in imagination; in renouncing, with voluble tongue and vain heart, everything intricate in motive and mixed in quality, in a downright passion of love for absolute, unapproachable patriotism!" Familiar, too, is the depreciation of talent in politics: "Talent," this invective continues, "is apt to generate presumption and self-confidence; and no qualities are so necessary, in a Legislator, as the opposites of these—which, if they do not imply the

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existence of sagacity, are the best substitutes for it—whether they produce, in the general disposition of the mind, an humble reliance on the wisdom of our Forefathers, and a sedate yielding to the pressure of existing things, or carry the thoughts still higher, to religious trust in a superintending Providence, by whose permission laws are ordained and customs established, for other purposes than to be perpetually found fault with." It is to be apprehended that if Wordsworth's detractors had noticed that curious phrase, " a sedate yielding to the pressure of existing things," they would have given it wider currency than the limits of Westmorland.

Besides these crudities of prejudice and party feeling, two strong lines of conviction run through the addresses. They have great significance in a study of Wordsworth's life. The two lines are parallel, though one was generated by the other. He believes that the Revolutionary doctrines have been proved false, and that England, if she yields an inch to the urgency of reformers, will be letting in " *the Vanguard of a Ferocious Revolution.*"

Relentless to his own past, he exclaims: " Remember what England might have been with an Administration countenancing French Doctrines at the dawn of the French Revolution, and suffering them, as it advanced, to be sown with every wind that came across the Channel!" Does he forget his own plea that the French Revolution would not have turned into despotism had France been free from the terror of invasion?

One of the ground-principles of the Revolution was that persons, not property, should be the first concern of government. This principle Wordsworth in his youth accepted, but now repudiates. In support of his present view he makes the following summary of civil history, which is far more perverse and contrary to fact than any dogmatic claim ever put forth by Rousseau: " Knowing that there could be no *absolute* guarantee for integrity, and that there was no *certain* test of discretion and knowledge, for bodies of men, the prudence of former times turned to the best

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substitute human nature would admit of, and civil society furnished. This was property." On this ground he appeals to his readers to support the Lowther candidate.

Keats passed through Rydal in June, on his joyous northern tour, and called on Wordsworth, who was not at home. Lord Houghton says:* "His disappointment at missing Wordsworth was very great, and he hardly concealed his vexation when he found that he owed the privation to the interest which the elder poet was taking in the general Election. This annoyance would perhaps have been diminished if the two poets had happened to be on the same side in politics, but, as it was, no views and objects could be more opposed."

Keats respected Wordsworth's genius. His first reference to him is in the sonnet, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning," written in 1816. And writing of this to Haydon, November 20, 1816, he says: "The Idea of your sending it to Wordsworth put me out of breath—you know with what Reverence I would send my well-wishes to him." It was in reviewing Keats's "Poems," in *The Examiner*, that Leigh Hunt declared Wordsworth "the successor of the true and abundant poets of the older time." On January 10, 1818, Keats writes: "I have seen Wordsworth frequently. Dined with him last Monday."

On January 23, he says: "I have seen a great deal of Wordsworth." This is the letter in which he tells of receiving a lock of Milton's hair from Hunt. The latter in one of his sonnets inspired by this occasion, alludes unmistakably to Wordsworth, when he says:

> I'll wear it, but as my inherited due,
> (For there is one, whom had he kept his art
> For Freedom still, nor left her for the crew
> Of lucky slaves in his misgiving heart,
> I would have begged thy leave to give it to)
> Yet not without some claims, though far apart.

* "Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats," 1848, Vol. I., p. 152.

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It is quite evident from the tone of Keats's reference to Wordsworth that he did not reverence his character, partly for the reason implied in Hunt's lines, partly because he thought him egotistical.

For example, writing to his brothers, February 21, 1818, he says: "I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, vanity, and bigotry. Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher."

It is not surprising if Wordsworth's intercourse with lively and irreverent spirits in so open a field as London had an unpleasant result. We get hints of this in Keats's letters. On March 23, he says: "It has as yet been a mystery to me how and where Wordsworth went. I can't help thinking he has returned to his Shell—with his beautiful Wife, and his enchanting Sister." And in April he writes to Haydon: "I am afraid Wordsworth went rather huff'd out of Town—I am sorry for it—he cannot expect his fireside Divan to be infallible—he cannot expect but that every man of worth is as proud as himself. O that he had not fit with a Warrener—that is, dined at Kingston's."

It is less remarkable that John Hamilton Reynolds, the satirist, should lay bare Wordsworth's failing. In an article defending Keats,* he declares: "Wordsworth might have safely cleared the rapids in the stream of time, but he lost himself by looking at his own image in the waters."

It was, we may be sure, in a gay, vivacious mood, and with no intention of depreciating Wordsworth, that Keats had written to Reynolds, in February:

"It may be said that we ought to read our contemporaries, that Wordsworth, etc., should have their due from us. But, for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist? Every man has his speculations, but every man does

* Published in *The Alfred West of England: Journal and General Advertiser*, for October 6, 1818. See H. Buxton Forman, "Complete Works of John Keats," IV. 179.

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not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage, and deceives himself. Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing. Sancho will invent a journey heavenward as well as anybody. We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and, if we do not agree, seems to put its hand into its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle or amaze it with itself, but with its subject."

He continues in this high-flying style for some space, at Wordsworth's expense, but his more sober judgment rules in another letter to Reynolds, of May 3, in which he compares Wordsworth with Milton. In explaining the dark passages of life, and "in thinking into the human heart," he finds Wordsworth superior. Among the books in the Rydal Mount library was a copy of Keats's "Poems," 1817, with the words "To W. Wordsworth, with the Author's sincere reverence," written on the title-page.

To have done with Keats's references to Wordsworth, which nearly all centre about this time, we have only to note that in some doggerel verses called "The Gadfly," in which one of the Lowthers is ridiculed, verses written July 17 and sent to his brother Tom, Wordsworth's name occurs, and once he speaks of "the Wordsworthian, or egotistical sublime."

Young as he was, Keats's eye for character was keen. He formed his opinions with manly independence. One is at first disposed to give weight to his high estimate of Wordsworth's poetry and deny it to the rather disparaging view he took of his character, but everyone who has carefully read Keats's letters must perceive that the purity of his heart and the freshness and vigour of his intellect made him a man whose moral judgments were exceptionally sound. He rarely passed censure on anyone.

Shelley's condemnation, uttered at about the same time,* need not be taken so seriously. He did not know

* Letter from Bagni di Lucca to Thomas Love Peacock, June 25, 1818, in Mr. Ingpen's edition of Shelley's letters, p. 607.

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Wordsworth, and his political bias was stronger even than Keats's. He wrote:

"The news of the result of the elections, especially that of the metropolis, is highly inspiring. I received a letter, of two days' later date, with yours, which announced the unfortunate termination of that of Westmorland. I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villainy of those apostates: What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets."

Passing gladly from Wordsworth's adventures in the political field, which show to what extremity of opinion and intemperance of language a high-strung novice may be wrought, we turn for relief to his poems of that year, 1818. But here disappointment awaits us, and we are reminded of the mysterious connection which we have already more than once remarked between his views of society and the quality of his verse. So long as he trusted human nature and was concerned for men as men, so long as his outlook was hopeful, catholic, and democratic, his poetry retained its touching simplicity and that reverent realism from which the mind could spring to infinite spiritual heights. I am far from affirming that in an aristocratic theory of history collateral support for a great poet's labours might not be found. But the fact is that in Wordsworth's case, poetic genius failed in curiously exact proportion as he passed from a liberal to a narrow estimate of human rights. Lord Morley's remark* that "Wordsworth, who clung fervently to the historic foundations of society as it stands, was wholly indifferent to history," seems to me quite misleading. I can think of no poet who was more attentive to history and more agitated by what he deemed its lessons. Not the shows, the colour, the sentiments of history, but its effect on human welfare,

* Introduction to "The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth," p. lxii.

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interested him. To employ a simple, though improper, analysis, we might say that he viewed history as a moralist rather than as an artist. Of the period in his life which we have now reached, and all that follows, Lord Morley's other statement is true,—Wordsworth "clung fervently to the foundations of society" as it stood; but of the earlier and more glorious and productive period, the very contrary must be said.

The poems, so far as is known, which Wordsworth wrote in 1818 are "The Pilgrim's Dream, or the Star and the Glow-worm," five Inscriptions supposed to be found in and near a Hermit's Cell, and the "Evening Voluntary, composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty." In his earlier and better period, those poems which were not merely the spontaneous utterance of joyous emotion were composed through one of two processes. Sometimes a simple, natural event or object suddenly detached itself in his mind from its surroundings and appealed to him through that constant, universal, and inherent interestingness of which the world is full. When the beauty or the pathos of the thing itself was obvious, he was content merely to let nature be her own interpreter. For example, he drew no moral from "Alice Fell." When a moral was inferred, as in the last stanza of "Simon Lee":

> I've heard of hearts unkind, good deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning.

it is generally as simple and natural as the instance which suggested it, and for that reason sometimes all the more startling. Or, by a different process, a great moral truth, important to all men and a part of all men's experience, took possession of his mind and dwelt there, with accessories, analogies, and associations, till it had absorbed their essences. Then it grew clear again, but with more body and strength, like wine. The "Ode to Duty" would seem to have had such a genesis.

The poems written in 1818, on the contrary, are based

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on rare occurrences, or on forced and peculiar fancies. They are deliberately didactic and obtrusively sententious. And like poetry of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, they abound in personifications and other artificial devices. No longer content with the religious feeling supplied by nature and by human experience, the poet invokes again and again the agency of angels and seraphs. What kind of truth, moral, historical, scientific, or poetic, we ask ourselves, is preserved in the lines:

> Time was when field and watery cove
> With undulated echoes rang,
> While choirs of fervent angels sang
> Their vespers in the grove?

What grove, what field? we wonder; andhow could Wordsworth have written "watery cove"? There are many lovers of poetry who find fault with pieces like "The Thorn," with its "little muddy pond," but that is at least Wordsworth. Any poor poet, with a defective ear and a reluctance to call things by their names, might have written the first stanza of the "Second Inscription":

> Pause, Traveller! whosoe'er thou be
> Whom chance may lead to this retreat,
> Where silence yields reluctantly
> Even to the fleecy straggler's bleat."

And, in the "Evening Voluntary," the verse

> Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!

cannot but leave us grieving.

As a seal and sign of social rank, and in recognition of his services to the Tory party, Wordsworth was appointed Justice of the Peace, towards the end of the year 1818. Mrs. Coleridge, writing to Poole* at this time, says, in a sprightly vein:

"You perhaps do not know that Wordsworth is, like yourself, a *Justice of the Peace*. I spent the Christmas month with him and his family, and many a laugh we

* "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 250.

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had at him about this same 'Justice,' which then he had not taken, and I think the ladies were much against it, thinking it would break in upon his poetic musings, and that he would not be able to perform the duties of it; but his son John, a youth in his sixteenth year, a very good, sweet-tempered lad, but without one spark of imagination, or the slightest feeling for the importance of his father's studies, gave it as his opinion that his father would be employing a part of his time *very wisely* in undertaking the office, for J. Carter, the Clerk, was able to do almost all belonging to the distribution of the Taxes."

Again, on October 3, 1819, Mrs. Coleridge writes, rather pettishly, to Poole (Original in the British Museum): "The Wordsworths are quite in request. You have no notion how much respectability attaches to them. Their society is much courted." This letter also contains a reference to the Pantisocratic adventure: "In the literary gazette there was a full account of our juvenile American scheme, and that Mrs. Fricker and Mrs. Southey had consented to go with the young people in their wild scheme of colonization." Of Wordsworth's published letters in 1819, two, to Lord Lonsdale, are concerned with a translation of Virgil which he was making; one, of a more interesting and personal nature, is addressed to Wrangham, February 19, 1819.* In this he says, with some spirit, referring, let us hope, to the attack on Coleridge more than to that on himself: "I know little of Blackwood's Magazine and wish to know less. I have seen in it articles so infamous that I do not choose to let it enter my doors." But it is to be feared that he thought chiefly of the *Blackwood's* controversy over his "Letter to a Friend of Burns."

The fatal narrowing of his outlook is shown also by his amazing statement to Wrangham: "Except now and then, when Southey accommodates me, I see no new books whatever." Yet these were the years of "Alastor," "The Revolt of Islam," "Endymion," "Manfred," the third and fourth cantos of "Childe Harold," "Rob Roy," "The Heart of Midlothian"—

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 124.

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one hardly knows where to stop, for when were there ever three richer years than those that had just passed? When could a man have missed more by reading "no new books whatever"? The remark implies contempt. It is stupid and vain. There is no real excuse in his further statement: "My reading powers were never very great, and now they are much diminished, especially by candle-light. And as to buying books, I can affirm that on *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years. I include reviews, magazines, pamphlets, etc., etc." This is mere intellectual priggishness. The time of life had come, as he very well knew, when he could no longer draw upon the fresh sensuous impressions of youth. He had uttered the word of individual moral insight which it is given to some souls to have once, and usually no more than once. He had now reached the age when, if a man is to keep alive and not be a dead-weight upon society, he must love more and listen more, read more and concede more, than youth required or the active energy of early middle life allowed. This was no time for withdrawal from the world. Had he read new books, and sought the society of their authors, had he admitted the value of novel ideas and humbly tried to sympathize with them, the last thirty or thirty-five years of his life would have been freer from that self-complacency which, when disturbed, produced an irritable temper and a panic fear of change.

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CHAPTER XXIX

FRESH COURAGE

THAT Wordsworth retained at least the courage of his own convictions, however he may have under-estimated other men's, is shown by his publishing "Peter Bell," a tale in verse, in the spring of 1819. It was printed for Longman, with an engraving of a picture painted by Sir George Beaumont expressly for this purpose. In the dedication, to Southey, Poet Laureate, Wordsworth says, "pains have been taken at different times," during the long interval since the poem first saw the light, in 1798, "to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception; or, rather, to fit it for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the Literature of my Country." We admire and yet we do not like this lofty tone. He speaks as he thinks Milton would have spoken. We are never allowed to forget Milton in reading Wordsworth's prose. The vain-glorying is at second-hand. This no one can approve. But there is something admirable in the courage which enabled a man to hold his head so high when London was calling unto Edinburgh in ridicule of his self-conceit.

The poem, he says, "was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents, within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life." If at first thought this remark seem superfluous, we must reflect that Wordsworth, more than anyone else, deserves the credit for making it so. His imagination,

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then Shelley's, Byron's, Heine's, Leopardi's, and finally that of most later poets, were able to dispense with the supernatural. We should be mistaken if we assumed that, before Wordsworth, the exercise of high imagination had often been dissociated from mythology, superstition, or some view of divine interference with the laws of nature. Homer, the Greek tragedies, the "Æneid," the Hebrew prophecies, the Norse Sagas, the "Niebelungenlied," the "Divine Comedy," the most aspiring passages in Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Spenser, "Paradise Lost," "Comus," Goethe's "Faust" —not to mention the ballads of all countries—when we think of these, Wordsworth's statement ceases to appear a matter of course; it looks bold and original, as it really was when he made it.

The Dedication is dated April 7, 1819. Three Sonnets, "Suggested by Mr. W. Westall's views of the Caves, etc., in Yorkshire," and one "Composed during one of the most awful of the late storms Feb., 1819," were printed in the little volume, after "Peter Bell" itself. They clash terribly with it, being in the artificial manner of the non-Wordsworthian Wordsworth the poet had now become. The first of them contains a description of the punishment of the damned, which shocked some of his free-thinking contemporaries. The three Yorkshire sonnets had been printed already, in *Blackwood's Magazine* for January.*

It will probably never be known how much of "Peter Bell" really belongs to the period of "Lyrical Ballads," and how much, as it was printed twenty-one years later, is due to picking and patching. The original *motif* was the same as that of "The Ancient Mariner." A hard-hearted, wayward man is arrested and touched by nature. In the "Ancient Mariner," nature unfolds her extraordinary powers; she shows a face of terror. In "Peter Bell" it is the "blue and grey, and tender green," of a mild night, it is a "soft and fertile nook," a "silent stream," that creep into the soul. In each

* Without his consent, I believe, though the editor stated that permission had been given.

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poem human dulness and cruelty are rebuked by a lesson drawn from the suffering of an inferior animal. In each an effort is made to produce a sense of awe without calling upon preternatural agencies. In each a ballad measure is used, and we also find those unexpected leaps from the trivial to the sublimely impressive which occur in the best ballads. Where the planning of the two poems differs most is in Wordsworth's attempt to employ an ingredient which is rarely if ever present in tragic ballads—namely, humour.

> I've played, I've danced, with my narration,

he says. His theory of poetry justified him in choosing a peddler-tramp for a hero, and an ass for the animal whose fidelity completes the conversion begun by the soft influences of "moving waters at their priest-like task," but it could have been nothing else than a desire to provoke mirth which made him tell us twice that

> the Ass, with motion dull,
> Upon the pivot of his skull
> Turned round his long left ear.

There is enough wickedness in bigamy to have invested Peter's character with an atmosphere of guilt and terror; to give him twelve wives was to make him comic. Blue Beard is comic, even to very young children. In trying to create a hero of this type, Wordsworth had Tam o' Shanter in mind. But Tam was not a rogue, and Burns's poem is not tragic. We cannot help concluding that Wordsworth violates the proper desire of the most jealous lovers of art, which is that the *genres* shall not be too much mixed. Incongruous medleys were to be common enough in the nineteenth century. Victor Hugo with his dwarfs and court-fools, and Richard Wagner with his stage monsters, were for a long time to enjoy immunity from criticism on this head. There are, of course, poems, as there are musical compositions, where the familiar or playful or broadly humorous passes very effectively into a plaintive or a solemn strain. Villon has these effects

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again and again. But the change is sudden and complete, and the contrast simple. In "Peter Bell" the action drags and nothing is simple, nothing finished. The piece has been held up as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction and choice of subject; it is not, however, by "lowness" of theme or language that it really gives offence, but by the number of incongruous emotions it calls forth. The poet plays a weird minor on the black keys and a gay ditty on the white. How much of this unfortunate mingling of strains is due to revision, is not known. I am inclined to think that Wordsworth, having in mind the way the simpleness of "Lyrical Ballads" had been misunderstood, invented the playful introduction long after 1798, with a view to disarming criticism. And I venture a guess that the following stanzas were not in the poem as originally written:

'Tis said, meek Beast! that, through
Heaven's grace,
He not unmoved did notice now
The cross upon thy shoulder scored,
For lasting impress, by the Lord
To whom all human kind shall bow;

Memorial of his touch—that day
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,
Entering the proud Jerusalem,
By an immeasurable stream
Of shouting people deified.

The apostrophe to the "meek Beast," the double negative "not unmoved," the long adjective "immeasurable," the inversion in the last line—are marks of Wordsworth's later manner. Moreover, in 1798, he would, I think, have shrunk from anything that might have looked like an acknowledgment of Christianity. These stanzas were omitted in the edition of 1827, as though Wordsworth felt that they did not harmonize with the context. He restored them, however, in 1836. Apparently he realized that not only this confusion of motives was a blemish, but that the admixture of humour was ill-timed and awkward, for he also with-

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drew a stanza which had a satirical turn. The reason he gave, however, was that the profanity gave offence to some overscrupulous person. The stanza ran thus:

> Is it a party in a parlour ?
> Cramm'd just as they on earth were cramm'd—
> Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent and all damn'd !

Yet it was the crude simplicities, not the overrefinement of the poem, that shocked most readers. Even friendly and tolerant Crabb Robinson was disturbed. He wrote in his Diary, May 3, 1819: "Barnes attacked me about 'Peter Bell,' but this is a storm I must yield to. Wordsworth has set himself back ten years by the publication of this work." Curiously enough, the reviewer in *Blackwood's* was more lenient, and urged little objection against the "commonness" of the poem, though finding fault with its "dallying prolixity," an accurately descriptive phrase.

But how all these objections fall into their proper perspective as secondary things, when we read in Coleridge's notebook his unhesitating opinion:* "Wordsworth's most wonderful and admirable poem 'Peter Bell'"!

If the poem in any shape had appeared in "Lyrical Ballads," with its companions, it would have been even more ridiculed than they were. Coming out in 1819, it had a large sale, as compared with Wordsworth's previous publications, and a fairly respectful reception. Readers by this time knew what to look for in Wordsworth; and in "Peter Bell" there is much that is touching, much that is beautiful. The several bits of landscape are exquisitely composed, and the artist has more colours on his palette than usual. The Ass is made almost humanly pathetic. Peter is no mean example of dramatic creation. The feeling is imparted that external nature is in league with the moral world. To do this is surely one of the great objects of poetry.

* "Anima Poetæ," p. 124.

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Two parodies on "Peter Bell" bear the date 1819. Their writer or writers showed a cruel knowledge of the foibles of Wordsworth's character, and, moreover, seized very cleverly upon the features in his poetry which lend themselves to this kind of perversion. One is entitled "The Dead Asses, A Lyrical Ballad," and was printed for Smith and Elder. The other and far cleverer burlesque is called "Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad," and was printed for Taylor and Hessey. The latter in its preface and footnotes and Supplementary Essay mocks quite amusingly the clumsy and naive way in which Wordsworth was accustomed to load his volumes with critical remarks, excellent in themselves, but out of place, and with trivial comments on particular poems.* Wordsworth, if he ever saw these productions—and it is to be hoped he was spared the pain—might possibly have had philosophy enough to laugh at the parodies, but must have been enraged—and perhaps arrested—by the evidence that his detractors thought him grossly egotistical and a time-server. "I love my venerable Monarch and the Prince Regent," he is made to say, and also "Mr. Vansittart, the great Chancellor of the Exchequer, is a noble character:—and I consecrate this note to that illustrious financier."

Reynolds's "Peter Bell" reached Shelley at Leghorn, and, according to Mrs. Shelley, amused him exceedingly. He also read Leigh Hunt's review of both the real and the spurious poem, in *The Examiner* for April 26 and May 3. In October he wrote his "Peter Bell the Third," beginning in great good-humour, but soon breaking into a strain of caustic satire. He must have had private information of the fact that Reynolds's book had been printed before its "original," for he calls it "the antenatal Peter." I find nothing in Shelley's "Peter Bell" to indicate that he had read more of Wordsworth's than what was quoted in *The*

* It was written by John Hamilton Reynolds, according to Mr. Lucas (VI. 520), who says the real "Peter Bell" had not yet been published. Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, in his Oxford edition of Shelley's poems, p. 342, says Reynolds's skit appeared in April, a few days before Wordsworth's poem.

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Examiner. "Peter Bell the Third" is not a parody. It is a grotesque development of the idea that Wordsworth had bartered away his soul. He is the third Peter Bell. And who, we may ask, is the Devil to whom he sells himself, and at whose table he serves? The Devil's house stands in Grosvenor Square, from which we may infer what we please. Shelley's real complaint against Wordsworth is that he has gone over to the enemy—that is, to the Tory party. He draws the very true inference that he has therefore grown dull. All further hints and shadows of hints in this wild burlesque may be dismissed as sheer fancy. The best stanzas are those about Coleridge, in Part the Fifth; some of them have a tragic depth unusual in any but the greatest satire, as, for example:

> He was a mighty poet—and
> A subtle-souled psychologist;
> All things he seemed to understand,
> Of old or new—of sea or land—
> But his own mind—which was a mist.
>
> This was a man who might have turned
> Hell into Heaven—and so in gladness
> A Heaven unto himself have earned;
> But he in shadows undiscerned
> Trusted—and damned himself to madness.

Mrs. Shelley was entirely too conciliatory when she declared, in her Note on "Peter Bell the Third," that nothing personal to Wordsworth was intended in this poem, that it was purely ideal, a criticism of his compositions. It has, on the contrary, not much to say against Wordsworth's works, which Shelley admired, and a great deal to say against his choosing his friends among the rich and powerful. We infer, to be sure, that Shelley had found "The Excursion" dull and took for granted that "Peter Bell" was dull too. He had never met either Wordsworth or Coleridge. That he wrote without personal spite and knew little about Wordsworth's private life, a passage in a letter to Charles Ollier, his publisher, shows. It was written at Pisa, May 14, 1820:

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" If ' Peter Bell ' be printed (you can best judge if it will sell or no, and there would be no other reason for printing such a trifle), attend, I pray you, particularly to completely concealing the author; and for Emma read Betty, as the name of Peter's sister. Emma, I recollect, is the real name of the sister of a great poet who might be mistaken for Peter."

Shelley's motive was entirely personal, though without spite or jealousy. The Manchester massacre had occurred in August and the Yorskhire bread riots in October. He was burning with indignation against all persons who, like Wordsworth, upheld the cause of " order " at the expense, as he conceived, of justice and mercy. He made fun of " Peter Bell " for no other reason than because he deemed its author a hopeless renegade.

Wordsworth was becoming well known to the public, even in Scotland, but although the tide of opinion was turning steadily in his favour, there was a strong undercurrent of disapproval. For example, *The London Magazine* for February, 1820, contained a review of Poetry and Prose, by a Member of Parliament and Free Mason, in which, of a poem against the lottery, it is said: " This piece . . . might be supposed to have been written by Mr. Wordsworth, did that gentleman ever think it right to strike at those causes of popular depravity and wretchedness which are connected with the selfishness or neglect of men in power." There is a milder sting in a remark (By Hazlitt ? The article is signed T.—Winterslow Hut) in an essay " On the Conversation of Authors," in the same magazine for September, 1820: " Wordsworth sometimes talks like a man inspired on subjects of poetry (his own out of the question), Coleridge well on every subject, and Godwin on none."

The author of " Common Sense," an anonymous poem of the same year, accused Wordsworth of being " poor in fancy."

Bernard Barton, the Quaker, in his " Poems," London, 1820, has a piece addressed to Wordsworth

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" on the publication of his poem entitled Peter Bell," in which he declares:

> I quarrel not with those who deem
> Essential to poetic mood
> High sounding phrase and lofty theme,
> And " ready arts to freeze the blood;"
> Intent to dazzle or appal;
> But nature still is best of all.

In *The London Magazine* for March, 1820, there appeared a whole article on Wordsworth, highly eulogistic, though agreeing with " Biographia Literaria " in deprecating his dropping into " the commonplace." The writer, on the whole, plants himself on the safe middle ground of Wordsworth criticism, acclaiming him as one of the world's great poets, though disliking and misunderstanding that " commonness " which is an absolute essential of his art. He says: " Mr. Wordsworth connects the simplest and commonest images with the rarest and often the most complicated thoughts and feelings:—by which we may see what a mistake it is to speak of him as a writer aiming at simplicity and failing in the attempt. . . . He is fearless in the familiarity of his expressions, because he is conscious of the depth, grandeur, and importance of his sentiments." But, we are told, he carries his " levelling tendency " too far.

Again, in the same magazine for June, 1820, Wordsworth's poetry is highly praised and even his chance remarks are quoted with deference:

" Mr. Wordsworth has given us the *essence* of poetry in his works, without the machinery, the apparatus of poetical diction, the theatrical pomp, the conventional ornaments. . . . I remember Mr. Wordsworth's saying that he thought ingenious poets had been of small and delicate frames, like Pope; but that the greatest (such as Shakespeare and Milton) had been healthy and cast in a larger and handsomer mould. So were Titian, Raphael, and Michael Angelo."

A short time after " Peter Bell," in the summer, Longman brought out another slim volume of verse,

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entitled " The Waggoner, a Poem, to which are added Sonnets, by William Wordsworth." The Dedication, to Charles Lamb, is dated May 20, 1819. The appended sonnets are: " Aerial Rock—whose solitary brow," " While flowing rivers yield a blameless sport," " The Imperial Consort of the Fairy King," " Fallen and diffused into a shapeless heap," " As the cold aspect of a sunless way " (called here " Captivity," with no mention of Mary Queen of Scots, and printed between quotation marks), " Lone flower, hemmed in with snows and white as they," " Among the mountains were we nurs'd, lov'd stream," " With each recurrence of this glorious morn," " Grief, thou hast lost an ever-ready Friend," " I watch, and long have watch'd, with calm regret," " I heard (alas, 'twas only in a dream,") and " Eve's lingering clouds extend in solid bars."

During the winter evenings of 1819 Wordsworth made an anthology of his favourite passages from poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which he dictated to Sara Hutchinson. In her neat handwriting, and preceded with a pen-and-ink portrait of Wordsworth and an original sonnet, they made a beautiful volume, which was given to the Lady Mary Lowther, daughter of the Earl of Lonsdale, as a Christmas present. About a third of the extracts are from Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, of whom Wordsworth wrote, in his Essay Supplementary to the Preface, 1815: " Now it is remarkable that, excepting a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, and some delightful pictures in the Poems of Lady Winchelsea, the Poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the Paradise Lost and the Seasons does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination." Nevertheless, twenty-two other poets are represented in this collection, some of them, to be sure, Elizabethans. The passages are nearly all in an heroic strain, the

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moralizing of strong minds. They were evidently not chosen either for their musical quality or for their intellectual pungency, but rather for solidity, elevation, and sincerity.*

In the spring of 1820 Longman published, uniform with the two other volumes of that year, "The River Duddon, a series of Sonnets, Vaudracour and Julia, and other Poems, to which is annexed a Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England, by William Wordsworth." The book was dedicated to the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, D.D. The other poems are "The Longest Day," "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots," "To —— on her first ascent of Helvelyn," "To Lycoris" (two odes), "The Brownie's Cell," "Composed at Cora Linn," "To the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth (with the Sonnets to the River Duddon and other Poems in this Collection)," "Repentance," "Song for the Spinning Wheel," "Hint from the Mountains," "Dion," "The Pilgrim's Dream," "Artegal and Elidure," "A Fact and an Imagination," "To ——" ("Those silver clouds"), five sonnets ("The stars are mansions," "A book came forth of late," "When haughty expectations, Lady!" "I rifled a Parnassian cave," "Ward of the Law—dread shadow of a King"), five "Inscriptions supposed to be found in and near a Hermit's Cave," a translation of Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale," "September, 1819," "Upon the same occasion," the lines "Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty," "A little onward lend thy guiding hand," "The Pass of Kirkstone," and the "Vernal Ode."

We have already considered, in connection with the dates of their composition, all the poems in this volume that seem to have any biographical significance or are otherwise important, except the "Duddon" Sonnets themselves. There are thirty-four of these, the seven-

* The first edition is "Poems and Extracts (from the works of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea and others), chosen by William Wordsworth for an Album presented to Lady Mary Lowther, Christmas, 1819: Printed literally from the original album," edited by H. Littledale, with a preface by J. Rogers Rees: Henry Frowde, London, 1909.

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teenth, originally printed in the " Waggoner " volume, having been transferred to its present position in 1827.

It was a happy thought, originating with Coleridge, to give the poetical history of a stream, from its head-waters among the quiet hills to its place of rest in the sea,

> Where mightiest rivers into powerless sleep
> Sink, and forget their nature.

One who should expect a series of bright and lively pictures, and much variety of colour, or an attempt to delight the ear with musical imitations of waterfalls and softly gliding reaches, would be disappointed in this work. He will find what he wants in Tennyson's " Brook " and " The Lady of Shalott," or in " Sohrab and Rustem." When Dante described the descent of Arno from savage hills to savage towns, he did not linger to tell of dimpling pools and waving reeds; his curt words were of crime and war and treachery. So if we have any insight into Wordsworth's character, we shall be prepared to look for few images and many thoughts, few efforts merely to give pleasure, and a constant care to elevate the mind. Somewhat bare and austere these sonnets are, like the bleak hills and stony valleys they celebrate. They keep faith with their subjects, a self-sacrificing loyalty that scorns the specious gains of flattery. Few mountainous regions in old populated countries are so unblessed with legends as the English Lake district. It has virtually no local folk-songs. We can imagine in what a string of ballads Scott would have woven the history of the Tweed. There is almost as little human activity in the upper parts of the Westmorland vales as in the interior of Iceland or Skye; and so we have not in these sonnets the crowded life with which Crabbe filled his scenes. Yet Wordsworth makes the most of his legitimate opportunities, and the solitary farm, the stepping-stones, the small white church, the paths that lose themselves, are all the more touching amid the silence. Measure and artistic restraint, the self-sufficiency of truth, the confidence of reason, dwell at

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home in the Duddon poems. And at the close, as if to release the pent-up loveliness till then withheld, and the intellectual passion and yearning so long restrained, he gives us the great sonnet which begins:

I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide.

After the publication of the Duddon volume, Wordsworth's life was diversified in three ways—by the issuing of new editions of his works, with an admixture of fresh poems, by journeys on the Continent, to London, and elsewhere, and by ventures in the political field. There were, of course, domestic joys and sorrows, which, however, differed from those of ordinary men only in being perhaps more poignantly felt. They left comparatively few traces in his poetry. He strove, through his remaining years, to be more objective in his work. Few poets had ever found so much of their material and inspiration in their homes, their surroundings, and their friendships; henceforth his best poems, with here and there a notable exception, such as his sonnet "On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford for Naples," were to deal with public and historical subjects. At the time of his fiftieth birthday, in April, 1820, he might well have surveyed his past with satisfaction and his prospects for the future with confidence. His place as a great English poet was securely established. His literary career might even then have seemed almost fully rounded out, as indeed it was. His family life was serene. The education of his children was proceeding favourably. His dear sister was as yet in good health, and still the sharer of his highest joys. His brother Christopher was eminent as churchman and scholar. The breach with Coleridge had healed outwardly, though not inwardly. Nearly all the other friendships of his youth and early manhood remained unimpaired. Mathews and Beaupuy were dead, but with Jones and Wrangham he was still on the old footing; with Southey he was neighbourly; toward Sir Walter Scott his affection and respect had increased; the Lambs and the Wordsworths grew closer to one another every year, and a new friend

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had been found in Crabb Robinson. We are sorry to hear less of Thomas Poole; distance may have had something to do with that. The Clarksons were kind and cheerful as ever. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, through Dorothy's affection for the latter, had become friends of the family. The Hutchinsons were people of solid worth, and Sara Hutchinson was a useful and beloved member of the Wordsworth family. Mrs. Wordsworth was a good manager, provident, hospitable, and yet able to spare thought and time for aiding her husband in his work. The poet's income was sufficient for the necessities of his household.*

Only one cloud cast a shadow over this bright scene—a melancholy fear of political change. His patriotism was historical. He had a high, perhaps an exaggerated conception of England's share in civilizing the world. At least she had, in his opinion, saved Europe. He idealized the institutions which he thought had produced so much good. They formed a glorious image in his mind. He spoke and wrote of the fabric of the state as if it had been a homogeneous, self-sustaining edifice, with parts so organically related that if one were taken away all would collapse. Every proposed reform, he insisted, should be considered with reference to this danger. Of government as a partnership between living men, the terms and purposes of which might vary from time to time as conditions required, he had apparently no conception. Yet this was the one deep and lasting doctrine announced by the Revolution, adopted even by Napoleon, and beginning, as early as 1820, to reassert its vitality in Liberalism. It was Wordsworth's high privilege as a poet to defend and glorify the works of the spirit as against the works of the flesh. He had idealized the ancient order of life in England. It represented in his eyes spiritual in conflict with material values. This conclusion seemed to him all the more necessary because the tampering which he dreaded began in the shape of material reforms. Thus his idealism, the purity and

* We find him in February, 1820, consulting Viscount Lowther about investing £2,000 in the French funds.

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strength of his imagination, deceived him. And since the reforms were inevitable, he took a gloomy view of the future. His reconciliation with the established religion of his country was due in part to a just view of the alliance existing between religion and poetry as upholders of spiritual against material interests. But it was due also to his sympathy with the false and unfortunate attitude of the Church in opposing reforms. He was attracted by the Church's claim to possess an organic life, just as the State was supposed to be a thing in itself.

In June, 1820, Wordsworth, his wife, his sister, and perhaps others of the family, were in London to attend the wedding of Mrs. Wordsworth's cousin, Thomas Monkhouse, to Miss Horrocks. They had passed through Oxford on their way, as is shown by the "Oxford, May 30, 1820" prefixed to two sonnets. Crabb Robinson writes on June 2: "At nine I went to Lamb's, where I found Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth. Lamb was in a good humour. He read some recent compositions, which Wordsworth cordially praised. Wordsworth seemed to enjoy Lamb's society. Not much was said about his own new volume of poems. He himself spoke of 'The Brownie's Cell' as his favourite." On June 11, after recording Wordsworth's willingness to make some concessions to public taste—and to Mr. Robinson's—by omitting several over-coarse expressions, he says: "I never before saw him so ready to yield to the opinion of others. He is improved not a little by this, in my mind." And on June 21 he writes: "Wordsworth was very pleasant. Indeed, he is uniformly so now."

On July 10, William, Mary, and Dorothy Wordsworth, with the newly-married Mr. and Mrs. Monkhouse and their sister, Miss Horrocks, set forth from the Rectory House, Lambeth, on a Continental tour, from which they returned to London on November 8. Their course lay through Dover, Calais, Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, Namur, Liége, and Aix-la-Chapelle, to Cologne, and thence along the Rhine to Mainz, where they turned aside to

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Frankfort and Heidelberg. From Heidelberg to Schaffhausen they skirted the Black Forest. They had bought a carriage and travelled freely, making no long stops. From Schaffhausen they made a very comprehensive journey through Switzerland. At Lucerne Henry Crabb Robinson joined them, and Mrs. Monkhouse and her sister were left behind to await the return of the rest of the party, who crossed the St. Gothard pass into Italy. They visited the Italian Lakes and Milan. Returning by the Simplon, they picked up the two ladies at Geneva, whence they proceeded to Paris by way of Dijon, Sens, and Fontainebleau. At Paris they sold their carriage, and after a stop of twenty-six days went by *diligence* through Amiens to Boulogne. On November 2, having embarked in a small vessel, they were driven back into the harbour by a storm, and had a narrow escape from shipwreck. They succeeded five days later in reaching Dover.

Robinson, who left the Wordsworths in Paris on October 8, says, under date of November 9: "In the afternoon called on Wordsworth. He arrived yesterday night in town after a perilous journey. He was detained nine days at Boulogne by bad weather, and on setting off from the port was wrecked. He gave himself up for lost, and had taken off his coat to make an attempt at swimming, but the vessel struck ***within*** the bar, and the water retired so fast that, when the packet fell in pieces, the passengers were left on land. They were taken ashore in carts."

Edward John Trelawny, in the first chapter of his "Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author," tells, in his gossiping way, of meeting at a hotel in Lausanne an Englishman with two ladies, who turned out to be Wordsworth and his wife and sister. The story is well composed and perhaps true. "The man," he says, "was evidently a denizen of the north, his accent harsh, skin white, of an angular and bony build, and self-confident and dogmatic in his opinions. The precision and quaintness of his language, as well as his eccentric remarks on common things, stimulated my mind."

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The unknown gentleman delivered an animated harangue against the nuisance of spoiling the Alps with roads and carriages, which terminated absurdly with the arrival of his own carriage. Learning who he was, Trelawny, his mind, I suppose, still over-stimulated, had the temerity to ask him abruptly, as he was about to step into the abused vehicle, what he thought of Shelley as a poet. "Nothing," was the very appropriate remark. Trelawny says: "Seeing my surprise, he added, 'A poet who has not produced a good poem before he is twenty-five, we conclude cannot, and never will, do so.' 'The Cenci,' I said eagerly. 'Won't do,' he replied, shaking his head as he got into the carriage."

For no other portion of Wordsworth's life have we such an abundance of detail as for these five months. He was accompanied by a full staff of competent reporters. His sister, at his request, made careful jottings of the details of the journey, with the intention, afterwards painfully carried out, of expanding them into a narrative for the benefit of her niece Dora, who had been left at home with Sara Hutchinson. It is to be regretted that the work has not been published in full. When a person with her gifts has the simplicity to resist the literary craftsman's temptation to embellish facts, and thus rob them of their significance, the performance is so rare as to deserve the honour of a complete edition. Even as they have been treated, these fragments heighten our respect for her as one of the few writers who have selected from the mass of their experiences those that were most interesting, and have described them with precious fidelity. Mrs. Wordsworth also kept a journal, upon a different plan, which was to place herself every day in some commanding spot and describe, with little or no comment, what she observed. She displayed, in this task, a remarkable gift of expression.* Her record,

* Extracts from Dorothy's finished Journal were printed by Professor Knight in his "Life of Wordsworth," much fuller selections in his "Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth," and supplementary passages in his edition of Wordsworth's Poems.

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excellent as it appears to be, judging from the extracts in Professor Knight's edition of the Poems, is less original than Dorothy's, if we may form an opinion from the number of her husband's favourite words and phrases which she employs. He, after their return to England, composed thirty-seven poems on subjects suggested during the tour. The genesis of nearly all these poems can be found in the two journals. Since the very words are often the same, we may infer that the ladies sometimes were influenced in what they wrote by the thoughts he expressed on the spot. There was certainly a partnership in ideas and language. Instances of this are easily found. Mrs. Wordsworth and Dorothy were both struck with the ugliness of the fish-women at Calais; Wordsworth's sonnet, "On Landing at Calais," seizes on this defect. Mrs. Wordsworth, using an adjective of which her husband was very fond, praises the graceful nun-like women of Bruges in their long cloaks, treading with *swan-like* motions the silent avenues of that venerable city; in one of his sonnets on Bruges, he uses the treasured word:

"Hence Forms that glide with swan-like ease along."

The veracious Dorothy, with her eye on the object, is content to say, "My brother and the nuns are very merry." Dorothy, after walking over the field of Waterloo, wrote: "We stood upon grass and corn fields where heaps of our countrymen lay buried beneath our feet. There was little to be seen, but much to be felt; sorrow and sadness, and even something like horror, breathed out of the ground as we stood upon it!" Compare with this her brother's sonnet, "After visiting the Field of Waterloo," particularly the conclusion:

We felt as men should feel
With such vast hoards of hidden carnage near,
And horror breathing from the silent ground.

In many instances the poems are no improvement upon the prose narratives. What they gain in brevity, weight, and sententiousness, they lose in simplicity. If they are more musical they are also more stiff and

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obscure. They were written, as it were, with an iron pen. They make considerable demand upon the intellect, and appeal only slightly to the heart. An attentive reader will be pleased with their echoes from Milton and Waller and other poets, but will discover no fresh images and few haunting cadences. A noble spirit, and a power of pressing ideas out of facts, he will, of course, find.

Crabb Robinson, the Pepys of that generation, fully appreciated his good-fortune in being the travelling companion of the greatest living English poet, and from the time he joined the party his Diary adds to the fullness of the record. But he acknowledged that the two other accounts put his to shame.

Of natural objects those that most impressed the travellers were waterfalls. It had always been so with William and Dorothy. Of historical subjects the favourites were those that commemorated resistance to tyrants—to the Austrians and Napoleon, or Buonaparte, as they insisted on calling him—and shrines and churches in lonely places. They noted the prostrate column of granite which was being dragged to Milan for a triumphal edifice and was left by the roadside when Buonaparte fell, and the pillar at Boulogne left unfinished by "the Corsican." A painful interest drawn from the heroic resistance of the Belgians in 1914 enhances the descriptions of the rich and peaceful Flemish towns through which they passed.

In a letter to the Earl of Lonsdale, from Paris, Wordsworth, it is refreshing to note, makes the following admission: "Nothing which I have seen in this city has interested me at all like the Jardin des Plantes, with the living animals and the Museum of Natural History which it includes. Scarcely could I refrain from tears of admiration at the sight of this apparently boundless exhibition of the wonders of the creation. The statues and pictures of the Louvre affect me feebly in comparison."

In Switzerland Robinson introduced to them a charming young American student, named Goddard, from Boston, who was drowned a few days later.

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Wordsworth had the satisfaction of knowing in after years that the poem he wrote upon hearing of this sad event helped to console the lad's mother.

Almost immediately after arriving in Paris the Wordsworths called on Madame Vallon and the Beaudouins. Robinson, who had been told their story, wrote in his Diary, under date of October 3:* "Having breakfasted alone, I repaired to Rue Charlot and was introduced to Mrs. Baudoin, a mild, amiable little woman in appearance. . . . Captain Baudoin accompanied us to the Monkhouses." On October 6 he wrote: "I dined at Mr. Baudouin's, who after dinner accompanied me to the Odéon." On October 7 he wrote: "Walked to see the W's. They were out, but I called and saw Mrs. Valon. We took coffee at the Mille Colonnes." On October 8 he wrote: "Went to Mr. Baudoin's. The W.'s were not returned from Versailles. I went alone to Miss Williams. . . . Went down again to B.'s and saw Miss W." The Wordsworths were living in the rue Charlot, boulevard du Temple.

Dorothy, writing to Mrs. Clarkson, October 14, 1820, from Paris, says:† "We have had great satisfaction at Paris in seeing our Friends whom I have mentioned to you. Of this when we meet. Last night we drank tea at Miss Williams'. She is a very sweet woman, and we were much pleased with our visit. I hope we shall go again. We talked much of you."

This was Helen Maria Williams, the republican authoress. On October 25, she addressed the following letter to Robinson:‡

"DEAR SIR: Your friends depart to-morrow morning, and that sin of procrastination which so easily besets us all, has left me but one moment in which to thank you hastily for what I can hardly thank you enough, your kindness in introducing me to the acquaintance of Mr. Wordsworth and his fellow travellers. I am much flattered that you thought me worthy of them, and am grateful to them for having devoted to me two or three

* From an unpublished part of the original, in Dr. Williams's Library.
† Unpublished letter in the British Museum.
‡ From the original, in Dr. Williams's Library.

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quiet evenings. I feel a little with respect to society as Gray did respecting fruit. He said if there were nothing but medlars and blackberries in the world, it would not be worth eating; and everyday conversation is, I really think, not quite so good as solitude. You will therefore easily believe with how much pleasure I left politics, the laws of election, and the charter, to take care of themselves, while I was led by Mr. Wordsworth's society to that world of poetical illusion, so full of charms, and from which I have so long been an exile. Miss Wordsworth has a desire to see my last little volume, your protégé—Will you obtain a copy for her of the second edition ?"

The Bishop of Lincoln states* that after their return to London the Wordsworths remained there " for the pleasure of seeing Mr. Rogers, Charles Lamb and his sister, the Lloyds, Mr. R. Sharp, Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Talfourd and others." He continues:

" On the 17th and 18th [November] they were with their dear friends at Hampstead Heath (Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Hoare), whence Wordsworth walked to visit Coleridge (in Grove Street, Highgate) on the 18th. On the 23rd, Wordsworth, his wife and his sister, left London for Cambridge, to visit his brother, Dr. Wordsworth, who had been promoted from the rectory of Lambeth to the mastership of Trinity College, in the summer of 1820. They remained his guests till the 6th December, and then proceeded to visit Sir George and Lady Beaumont at Coleorton, where they remained till the 20th; and on Christmas Eve they arrived at Rydal Mount."

* "Memoirs," II. 111.

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CHAPTER XXX

FAME AND FAVOUR

DURING their travels several things had happened to assure them of the poet's growing fame. At Lucerne they had picked up a German magazine, and been surprised to find their own name and a mention of the Duddon sonnets. When Goddard and his companion, a Scottish student, met Robinson, Goddard said: "If you will permit us, we wish to go with you. I am an admirer of Wordsworth's poems, and I should be delighted merely to see him. Of course, I expect no more." One of Dorothy's chief delights was in seeing several of the spots her brother had visited with Jones, thirty years before. They awoke half-melancholy memories of her enthusiasm and yearning. In her descriptions of dangerous places, which, as they travelled much on foot, were often encountered, she shows an alarming degree of sensibility. Knowing, as we do, the shadow impending over her spirit, we cannot help noticing this as a sign of peril.

The spirits of her brother, at least, were improved by the tour. Robinson writes, on November 18, 1820, in London: "Wordsworth was in excellent mood. His improved and improving mildness and tolerance must very much conciliate all who know him." On the 20th he accompanied the Wordsworths to the British Museum, and, noting that the poet was not demonstrative over the Elgin marbles, made a remark which is worth bearing in mind: "He is a still man when he does enjoy himself, and by no means ready to talk of his pleasure, except to his sister."

A letter from Sir Walter Scott to Chantrey, the

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sculptor, dated November, 1820, may be quoted here as showing, not only how Wordsworth's fame was growing, but also how little the real sources of his greatness were recognized by a fellow-poet:*

"I am happy my effigy is to go with that of Wordsworth [in the Royal Academy's Exhibition for 1821], for (differing from him in very many points of taste) I do not know a man more to be venerated for uprightness of heart and loftiness of genius. Why he will sometimes choose to crawl upon all fours, when God has given him so noble a countenance to lift to heaven, I am as little able to account for as for his quarrelling (as you tell me) with the wrinkles which time and meditation have stamped his brow withal."

By crawling on all fours, Scott means writing poems like "Peter Bell."

There were three great public questions which agitated Wordsworth during the years 1821 and 1822—Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation, and the liberty of the Press. His painful interest in these matters kept him from working placidly at "The Recluse," and gave a turn to almost all the poetry he found himself now able to compose. For the younger generation of poets he professed unmeasured contempt. We must suppose he included not only Byron, Moore, and Leigh Hunt, but also Shelley and Keats, in the ill-tempered denunciation contained in the following passage from a letter to H. C. Robinson, written in March, 1821: "As to poetry, I am sick of it; it overruns the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt—frog-poets (the croakers), mice-poets (the nibblers), a class rhyming to mice (which shall be nameless), and fly-poets. Gray, in his dignified way, calls flies the 'insect youth,' a term wonderfully applicable upon this occasion. But let us desist, or we shall be accused of envying the rising generation! Be assured, however, that it is not fear of such accusation which leads me to praise a youngster who writes verses in the Etonian," etc.—here he commends very highly some poems in a school mazagine by Henry Nelson Coleridge, his friend's

* Lockhart, "Life of Scott," VI. 283.

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nephew. Some of the verses were professedly "in imitation of Wordsworth," and *The Etonian* contained also, in that year, two articles, by the same gifted boy, "On Wordsworth's Poetry."

It has been wittily remarked that Coleridge's lapse into conservatism was the result of a moral decline, while Wordsworth's moral decline was the result of his lapse into conservatism.

Dr. Johnson wrote of Milton: "It appears in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal, as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion." Wordsworth, as the course of his life shows, had not a *real* confidence in himself. He was curiously compounded of timorousness and courage. He was unwilling to take the consequences of the boldest and best acts of his life. He failed to keep steadily in view until the end those glorious purposes which were among the true sources of his greatness. His contempt for other men was due to a stubborn refusal to look into their merits. No one was more sensitive to poetic excellence; few have possessed stronger powers of discrimination. If his praise was scanty, if his judgments were often harsh and narrow, it was because of a moral poverty. There is much truth in what De Quincey remarked, with the venom of mortified vanity, if we are careful to restrict it to the second Wordsworth, who had renounced the things of his brave youth—namely, that he was a spoiled child of Fortune. A man who had been more frequently contradicted and thwarted, who had learned to put up with criticism from kind but unadoring comrades, would have been more tolerant, and, in reference to his own work, would have been less inclined to force the note, and all this without necessarily surrendering any vital position in morals or æsthetics.

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Dorothy Wordsworth was anxious that he should employ his time to better purpose, on "The Recluse," and "the poem on his own life."* "But the will," she says, "never governs *his* labours." She wishes he had something of Southey's method, and Southey something of his inspiration. From her approval of Southey's wretched "Vision of Judgment," in which he translates George the Third to Heaven, we may fairly conclude that her brother tolerated that piece of sycophancy. Nothing was now too strong for him if it expressed loyalty to the Constitution and the Church of England. From the proposed admission of Roman Catholics to equal political rights, he anticipated a union between them and "other dissenters and infidels" for the overthrow of the Anglican system.

The inhospitality of his mind at this time is shown even more clearly by a passage from a letter to Wrangham, undated, but printed by Professor Knight under 1821.† Here he deprecates the expectation that the efforts of a society for distributing Bibles may bring the various sects together: "So deeply am I persuaded that discord and artifice, and pride and ambition, would be fostered by such an approximation and unnatural alliance of sects, that I am inclined to think the evil thus produced would more than outweigh the good done by dispersing the Bibles."

His extreme Toryism was becoming proverbial among his friends and causing some coolness. Mrs. Clarkson, for example, wrote to Crabb Robinson on March 31, 1821, as follows:‡

"The Wordsworths were well a fortnight ago. Miss W. was extremely disappointed at not seeing you at Cambridge. She had not time whilst she was here to reduce her journal into readable order, but as far as she went it is very interesting. It is curious to me to find them so torified. Though I *will* not acknowledge it to my husband, it is a little drawback upon the pleasure of our intercourse, even to me."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 146. This letter shows that even so late as 1821 "The Prelude" was still subject to revision.

† *Ibid.*, 165. ‡ From the original in Dr. Williams's Library.

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He opposed the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts. Turning his back on the principles which governed his better days, he violently denounced the movement to extend the Parliamentary franchise. "When I was young"—he wrote to Lord Lonsdale, December 4, 1821,* "giving myself credit for qualities which I did not possess, and measuring mankind by that standard—I thought it derogatory to human nature to set up property in preference to person, as a title for legislative power. That notion has vanished. I now perceive many advantages in our present complex system of representation, which formerly eluded my observation."

While professing to believe that freedom of the Press was the only safeguard of liberty, he declared that he was *therefore* in favour of vigorous restrictions. Despots and their defenders have seldom reasoned otherwise. He put his theory into practice, so far as his own household was concerned, by prohibiting the entry of current magazines.

Needless to say, Wordsworth's name is absent from the honourable list of those who helped Charles Lamb, in the spring of 1822, to raise a fund for the benefit of poor Godwin, who was in even greater straits than usual, and on the point of having his furniture and books sold. Robinson was down for £30, Byron for nearly the same amount, Lamb himself gave £50 from his own scanty resources, and Sir Walter Scott £10, although his political principles were as opposed to Godwin's as Wordsworth's, and his intellectual debt to Godwin nothing whatever.

Except for one or two visits to Lowther Castle, Wordsworth appears to have remained at home the whole of 1821 and 1822. He was laboriously composing his "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent," and also his "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." To trace, by means of a series of sonnets on eminent men and noteworthy events, the history of the Christian Church in England, was an enterprise worthy of a great poet. The idea appears to

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 163.

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have been original with Wordsworth, and nobly did he carry it out. He followed, to be sure, what might be termed the central or official tradition; within its limits he made a praiseworthy effort to be generous. Considering the course of life which he had deliberately adopted, it would be too much to expect that he should recognize such deep spiritual currents as Calvinism, Quakerism, and Methodism. His point of view was that of a high-churchman trying to be moderate, though absolutely incapacitated for taking a really broad and catholic survey. But criticism is less concerned with his limitations as an historian than with the degree in which he succeeded in turning history, or what was supposed to be history, into poetry. And here, I think, he is to be highly praised. Some of the sonnets are pompous, some are mechanical; but a certain number show the hand of a consummate artist moulding into sensuous form lofty and passionately conceived thoughts. The best of all, and one of the finest sonnets in our language, is "Mutability." Then there are the three splendid sonnets on "King's College Chapel, Cambridge," and the sweet tribute to Izaak Walton. The sonnet called "Imaginative Regrets," laboured and harsh though it is, contains the wonderful picture of a desert, with "stalking pillars built of fiery sand." The sonnet on "Old Abbeys" is a plea for an æsthetic and historical reverence for mediæval faith, a more temperate and wholesome plea than many which have been put forth. The sonnet on "Catechizing" touches the heart because of its exquisitely pathetic reference to the poet's mother. Those beginning "As star that shines dependent upon star," and "A genial hearth, a hospitable board," are tranquillizing pictures of the Church as it is and always has been, at the points where it touches the daily lives of men through its rural places of worship and its humane, learned, and devout clergy. By using the sonnet form, the poet was able to rise to these high levels when the subject warmed him. He escaped the danger of seeming to attempt anything like a systematic discourse, and could select without much restraint some

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of the really inspiring moments and figures of Church history. Where he was caught by the lure of system he failed, as in the sonnets on "Baptism," "Sponsors," and "The Commination Service."

The volume entitled "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820," was published by Longman early in 1822. It is strange that one of the best sonnets in the book, "Author's Voyage Down the Rhine (Thirty Years Ago)," was never reprinted by Wordsworth. "Ecclesiastical Sketches" was published by Longman probably in the same month as the "Memorials."

There were one hundred and two sonnets in the first edition. Thirty others were added in successive editions of the complete works. Only two other poems are ascribed to the year 1822, both of them composed on seeing the foundation preparing for the erection of Rydal Chapel. They might better have been left unprinted, though as contributions to a local festival they showed good feeling. Too much of Wordsworth's verse, in the last thirty years of his life, was inspired—if the word is permissible in this connection—by a view of nature according to which this vast, mysterious world is nothing more than an object-lesson pointing the way to Heaven. The prevalence of this view among hymn-writers is a chief cause of the general failure of their productions, as poems.

Only three poems are known to have been written by Wordsworth in 1823. That entitled "Memory," after six stanzas in a somewhat artificial style, ends with five lines of pure beauty and sincere feeling. Mindful of his own youth, and thinking, as he tells us, of his young friend Hartley Coleridge, upon whom a storm of temptation was beating, he reflects that, if early years are well spent, age may

> steal to his allotted nook
> Contented and serene;
>
> With heart as calm as lakes that sleep,
> In frosty moonlight glistening;
> Or mountain rivers, where they creep
> Along a channel smooth and deep,
> To their own far-off murmurs listening.

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A partial explanation of the fact that from this time forth Wordsworth produced less and less poetry is that he suffered much from failure of sight, due to inflamed eyelids. He was obliged almost entirely to give up reading, and spent his days in the open air. The ample grounds of Rydal Mount, with the high terrace walk that commands a view of Rydal Water and the steeps of Loughrigg, were his great delight. In May, 1822, he was thrown from a horse, while riding from Lowther to Haweswater, and received what at first seemed a very serious injury on his head. The wound was two inches long and rather deep, but his excellent constitution resisted the shock, and he recovered quickly and completely. In February, 1823, he was a guest at Coleorton Hall,* and appears to have gone directly thence to London, where Crabb Robinson breakfasted with him at Monkhouse's on April 2. Two days later there was a dinner at Monkhouse's, where Wordsworth and Mrs. Wordsworth were staying. "Our party consisted," says Robinson, "of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, and Rogers—five poets of very unequal worth and most disproportionate popularity, whom the public probably would arrange in a different order. During this afternoon Coleridge alone displayed any of his peculiar talent. I have not for years seen him in such excellent health and with so fine a flow of spirits. His discourse was addressed chiefly to Wordsworth, on points of metaphysical criticism." From Moore's account† we learn that Mrs. Wordsworth was present, and Mary Lamb ("the poor woman who went mad in a diligence on the way to Paris"). Robinson is described as "one of the *minora sidera* of this constellation of the Lakes," and Monkhouse as "a Mæcenas of the school, contributing nothing but good dinners and silence." Robinson tells us further that Miss Hutchinson and Mrs. Gillman, Coleridge's friend and hostess, were also present.

From London, about April 10, 1823, the Wordsworths

* Letter from Southey to H. C. Robinson, February 22, 1823.

† Moore's "Life."

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went to Lee Priory, near Wingham in Kent, intending to stay two weeks. But tempestuous winds and inflamed eyes detained them till May 16. On that day, with their daughter Dorothy, they set forward on a month's tour in Belgium and Holland. They returned to London, June 17, "without having laid in many poetical stores."* The eldest son, John, was at New College, Oxford. The younger, William, had been at Charterhouse, but, not having made sufficient progress, appears to have been removed.

It was in November, 1819, that Charles Lamb wrote one of his jolliest letters to Dorothy Wordsworth,† giving an account of the doings in London of her nephew "William Minor," a lad of promise, though no pedant or bookworm: "Rather he seemeth to keep aloof from any source of imagination, and purposely to remain ignorant of what mighty poets have done in this kind before him. For being asked if his father had ever been on Westminster Bridge, he answered that he did not know."

A few letters passed between Wordsworth and Walter Savage Landor in 1821, 1822, and 1824. From these we learn that the former, though of course not able to cope with his correspondent on the subject of Latin composition, was intimately acquainted with Virgil, Horace, Lucretius, and Catullus. He thought it had become the fashion to extol Dante above measure, and found his fictions often "offensively grotesque and fantastic," and the "Divine Comedy" "tedious from various causes."‡

In 1824 appeared the first volume of Landor's "Imaginary Conversations," containing the dialogue between Southey and Porson, who discuss Wordsworth, the great Greek scholar at first lazily repeating the conventional opinion that Wordsworth's subjects were low and his style tedious, but being roused at length to

* Robinson's Diary for June 17, 1823. Extracts from Mrs. Wordsworth's diary kept during this trip have been printed in the second volume of Dorothy Wordsworth's "Journals."

† E. V. Lucas, "Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 534.

‡ "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 152, 179, 214.

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hearty praise by Southey's recital of "'Laodamia,' a poem which is yet unpublished and incomplete."

Dorothy Wordsworth appears to have been absent from Rydal Mount the greater part of 1822. She visited her friends at Sockburn, and in company with Joanna Hutchinson took a journey into Scotland, where she travelled over some of the same ground as in 1803. A very few but characteristic fragments of her notes have been printed in the second volume of her "Journals." She had been encouraged to hope that by publishing her record of the visit to the Continent in 1820 she might make enough money to revisit Italy. Her outlook on life had remained much the same as ever. She was cheerful and observant. Except when she echoed her brother's opinions, she seems to have enjoyed the company and the books of her contemporaries. When she was not at hand to keep up his spirits and bring to his attention the beautiful and curious things which might inspire his pen, he almost ceased to write. The strain of melancholy in his disposition became predominant. He abounded too much in his own sense. His religious ideas associated themselves too closely with thoughts of death and a hereafter. One ought not to wish, perhaps, that there had been a touch of levity in his nature, but a grain of irony at this juncture, or of humour, would have done him no harm.

It is distressing to think how much his old age, which had already begun, lost through this premature drying up of the springs of joy, on the one hand, and of those preservative essences, on the other, which made Voltaire and Goethe grow sage as they grew old. They never knew declining years. Their activity and usefulness increased to the end. One lesson they had learned, which Wordsworth never learned, and it is perhaps as great as any other truth of religion—the lesson of tolerance. That he, whose achievements in the first half of his life were at least equal to Goethe's or Voltaire's, fell behind these other great octogenarians in the second half, was an incalculable loss to British and American culture. No sooner had he risen to a place of com-

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manding eminence than he forfeited it. Having gained men's hearts, he refused to open *his* heart to their new hopes. There was much in the poetry of his prime to encourage a belief that he could lead the way into the new age of science and of social progress. But he turned aside, and *turned back*. The history of his life shows why. When the intensity of his intellectual passion had already strained him, the joyous current of his nature suffered a violent check. Seeking substitutes for the social religion of his prime, he accepted a political theory and a theological creed which were not auxiliary to the finest feeling and the hardest thinking of the age. Domestic happiness and literary success hid from him the full extent of his spiritual *défaillance*, but he undoubtedly suffered from a dim consciousness that he had lost his hold on reality. The scope of his art grew narrow; it had once taken in the earth with the fulness thereof.

He had nothing but contempt for Byron, and disliked his poetry on both moral and æsthetic grounds. He declared that the tone of enthusiastic admiration of nature, especially in the third canto of "Childe Harold," was assumed, and, further, that it was a plagiarism from his own "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey." At the very same time, he somewhat inconsistently professed that he had not, nor ever had, a single poem of Byron's in his possession, except "Lara."* Meanwhile his acquaintance with the work of eighteenth-century poets, even the lesser lights, such as Mickle, Armstrong, Leyden, John Brown, and Tickell, was extensive. To the formation of his later and less original style, these worthies contributed their share, together with their greater predecessors, Thomson, Addison, Gray, and Collins, and the older masters, Marvell, Wither, Herbert, and Milton. He seems to have waited for an impulse to write verses, at the suggestion of James Montgomery, on behalf of the wretched little boys who were compelled by their masters to climb up narrow chimneys, but found no inspiration

* Letter to Henry Taylor in "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 211.

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in the proposed theme, although he could compose fluently about Mrs. Luff's parrot, Miss Southey's needle-case, and Lady Beaumont's flower-garden. The death of Shelley in 1822, and of Byron in 1824, drew from him, so far as I can discover, no expression of regret.

Crabb Robinson records a meeting with Wordsworth at Monkhouse's in London on April 19, 1824. Irving, the pulpit orator and mystic, was also present, and the conversation took a theological turn, Wordsworth modestly confessing his "inability to reconcile the Divine prescience with accountability in man."

From London Wordsworth appears to have returned to Rydal Mount by way of Cambridge and Coleorton Hall, spending part of April and May at the latter place with the Beaumonts. Upon the death of Mrs. Fermor, a sister-in-law of Sir George, he was surprised to find that she had left him a legacy of £100 as a token of her esteem. He wrote two old-fashioned and rather strained elegies upon her decease (they would have been better had he cared enough about this lady to leave *her* a hundred pounds), and one or two other pious pieces, suggested by objects at the Hall. In August, September, and October of this year, 1824, with his wife and daughter, he visited his brother-in-law, the farmer, Thomas Hutchinson, at Hindwell in Radnorshire, and his old college friend Jones, who was now an absentee clergyman, in North Wales. They were also for a time in Herefordshire. The only piece of verse assigned to this year which possesses high poetic value is the beautiful tribute to Mrs. Wordsworth, beginning "O dearer far than light and life are dear." These noble lines express his love and gratitude to her in terms which combine hearty downrightness of praise with a courtly grace; and then the strain rises from purely personal feeling to a sudden height of philosophic contemplation. She was entirely worthy of the poem; but it may well have been the case that her simple and fervid faith was disquieted by the far-reaching inquiry to which the sonnet gives voice.

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The advent of a new force in the material world is brought to our notice by their having sailed from North Wales to Liverpool in a steam-packet. On the banks of the Conway they were joined by Bishop Hobart, of New York. At Beddgelert they met Julius Hare, one of the famous Hare brothers, who was young John Wordsworth's tutor at Oxford.*

In a letter of Dorothy Wordsworth to John Kenyon, on October 4, 1824,† we find this item of peculiar interest: "You will be glad to hear that my nephew William is, though not a thriving plant, what—but for his books—we should call healthy at present. He is not fit for a public school. Therefore he attends Hartley Coleridge, who has now fourteen scholars—a flourishing concern for an Ambleside schoolmaster!—and he is steady and regular."

The expense of educating his boys put an end, for the time, to a plan, cherished by Wordsworth and still more by his sister, of going to Italy again. Sir George Beaumont's generous offer of money was declined. Except for visits to Coleorton Hall, in July and October, 1825, and one to Lowther Castle in August, the poet appears to have stayed at home until 1828, when he went on another tour up the Rhine. These were tranquil years. There was much delightful intercourse with the young people at Keswick, where Coleridge's daughter, Sara, and Southey's daughter, Edith, were growing up together. Skill in gardening, which seems to have attained its highest degree in the Lake country, had turned the grounds of Rydal Mount into a paradise. Literary strangers who passed that way were generally the poet's admirers, and therefore heavenly visitants. By shutting out obnoxious magazines and not taking a daily paper, the serpent was excluded.‡ It is a great

* Letter to Sir George Beaumont, September 20, 1824.

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 226.

‡ Dorothy, probably as much for the sake of the female members of the family as for her alleged reason of wishing to break the tedium of the long winter evenings for her brother, asked Crabb Robinson to get some London newsdealer to send them a paper the day after publication, and confesses that they had been dependent previously upon some neighbours,

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thing for a man of fifty-five to be able to write, as Wordsworth did to Beaumont:*

"I never had a higher relish for the beauties of Nature than during this spring, nor enjoyed myself more. What manifold reason, my dear Sir George, have you and I to be thankful to Providence! Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogma as they will, the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure, and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our species, I lean upon my friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St. John; and my creed rises up of itself with the ease of an exhalation, yet a fabric of adamant."

The family were upon the point of being driven out of Eden towards the end of 1825, Lady Fleming, the owner of Rydal Mount, wishing to let the place to a Mrs. Huddlestone. This trouble, which hung over them for a year or so, is commemorated in a poem beginning "The doubt to which a wavering hope had clung," written in 1826, and not published during Wordsworth's lifetime. To provide against the dreaded loss, he bought, for the large sum of £300, a field with beautiful trees that slopes from Rydal Mount down to the road by the lakeside. It was known as "Dora's field," and is now the property and delight of Mr. Gordon Wordsworth.

Dora was not only honoured by having a field named after her, but we find her father, in January, 1826, declining an offer of marriage for her, made evidently by one of her cousins. Apparently the ground of refusal was the relationship, but her father adds:

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who had gone away. I cannot imagine why she should have preferred stale news, unless she thought that fresh news, like fresh bread, was indigestible. Or perhaps it was a piece of economy (see "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 238). Again, she wrote to Robinson, July 2, 1825: "We are sadly out of the way of magazines. This I say only for Charles Lamb's sake. I begin now to despair of seeing any of the last papers till they are published all together; yet if Mr. De Quincey ever does find his way back to Rydal, we can borrow the magazines from him." *The London Magazine*, in which the "Essays of Elia" were appearing, was anathema to Wordsworth.

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 257.

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"If you have thoughts of marrying, do look out for some lady with a sufficient fortune for both of you. What I say to you now, I would recommend to every naval officer and clergyman, who is without prospect of professional advancement. Ladies of some fortune are as easily won as those without, and for the most part as deserving. Check the first liking to those who have nothing."*

The death of Thomas Monkhouse, early in 1825, was a severe loss to the Wordsworths, and greatly reduced the attractiveness of London for them. Dora Wordsworth was dangerously ill the next year, but after a long period of anxiety regained her health. Her brother John remained at Oxford in 1827 studying divinity. One of their neighbours since 1822 was Edward Quillinan, a retired army officer of Irish descent, son-in-law of Sir Egerton Brydges. His wife died as the result of an accident within a year after their settlement at Rydal, leaving two daughters, the younger of them only six months old. She was named Rotha, after the river that flows through the vale, and was Wordsworth's godchild. Quillinan was a man of fine taste and feeling, and no small literary accomplishment. We have a pretty picture of social pleasure in Mrs. Wordsworth's account of a picnic in August, 1827:†

"My sister Sara, Dora, and Mr. Quillinan—who has been our guest for the last few days—have ridden over to Keswick this morning. Southey's family are all well. I, together with Dora, spent a week very pleasantly with them since the commencement of the present month, and we also had a picnic meeting under Raven Crag by the margin of Wytheburn; the families of Greta Hall and Rydal Mount, with other vagrants, making a party of about thirty. A merry group we formed, round a gipsy fire upon a rocky point that juts from the shore, on the opposite of the lake from the highroad."

These pleasures and distractions dulled the poet's feelings and withdrew him from his work. This his faithful mentor Dorothy perceiving, she more than once, in the years 1824-1827, lamented that nothing was being

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 278. † *Ibid.*, 310.

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done to continue "The Recluse." He was making endless, and, as it appeared to her and Mrs. Wordsworth, needless, corrections in his poems, but composing almost nothing new. Public questions, the great common-life of the world, the politics of his own country, no longer inspired him to sing. He could, at this time, only croak, for his thoughts were doleful. His political creed bred distrust and cast discouragement upon every project for improvement that came within his reach. When he heard, for example, of the plan to found a university college in London, which should be open to students of every religious denomination, he declared, in an absurd letter to his patron, Lord Lonsdale:* "It cannot be doubted that a main motive with the leaders of this and similar institutions is to acquire influence for political purposes." He desired that a medical education should be kept beyond the reach of a poor student. "The better able the parents are to incur expense," he declared, "the stronger pledge have we of their children being above meanness and unfeeling and sordid habits." A statement more directly contrary to experience he could hardly have made. The advantages and disadvantages of social "classes" depend, no doubt, to a very considerable extent upon property; but Wordsworth had fallen into the dull error of a stupid party in assuming that the classes were permanent in their constitution, and that the effects of such an arrangement were beneficial to society as a whole. Coleridge, changed though he was, could not enjoy the trumpetings and triumphs of reaction. We find him, in 1824, writing, apropos of Gabriele Rossetti's exile: "Even general sentiments breathing the spirit of nobler times are treasons in the present Neapolitan and Holy Alliance Codes!"†

In these years of declining courage and distrust of the present, Wordsworth turned to the finished world of antiquity for solace and employment. He had completed a translation of three books of the "Æneid" by

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 259, June, 1825.

† To H. F. Cary, December 14, 1824: E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 733.

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February 5, 1819, as we see from a letter of that date to Lord Lonsdale.* Five years later he took this work in hand again, and sent the manuscript to Coleridge. The latter disapproved of the undertaking. Even if performed as successfully as possible, it would add nothing to Wordsworth's fame, but it was, he said, not well done. "Since Milton," he wrote, "I know of no poet with so many *felicities* and unforgettable lines and stanzas as you. And to read, therefore, page after page without a single *brilliant* note depresses me, and I grow peevish with you for having wasted your time on a work *so* much below you, that you cannot *stoop* and *take*. Finally, my conviction is that you undertake an *impossibility*, and that there is no medium between a prose version and one on the avowed principle of compensation in the widest sense. I confine myself to *Virgil*, when I say this."†

The same impulse that caused Wordsworth to translate Virgil impelled him to write verses on "The Pillar of Trajan," though his immediate purpose was to show his son how easily an Oxford prize-poem might be composed on this subject. The last nine lines lift the spirit, with something of his old imaginative power:

> Where now the haughty Empire that was spread
> With such fond hope? her very speech is dead;
> Yet glorious Art the power of Time defies,
> And Trajan still, through various enterprise,
> Mounts, in this fine illusion, toward the skies:
> Still are we present with the imperial Chief,
> Nor cease to gaze upon the bold Relief
> Till Rome, to silent marble unconfined,
> Becomes with all her years a vision of the Mind.

Only two other poems are ascribed to 1825, six to 1826, and about a score to 1827. Of all these only four are well known or much worth knowing: the lines "To a Skylark," beginning "Ethereal minstrel! Pilgrim of the Sky!" and three sonnets, "Scorn not the Sonnet, Critic, you have frowned," "There is a pleasure in poetic pains," and "If thou indeed derive thy light

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 119.

† E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," II. 733.

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from Heaven," and even this last was probably written long before 1827. There are fine parts also in the poem "To May," "Though many suns have risen and set." The "Farewell Lines addressed to Charles and Mary Lamb on the occasion of their removing from London to the country" are, one may say without presumption, quite unworthy of their subject. The sonnet entitled "Retirement" is thoroughly immoral. No Epicurean poet of the Roman decadence could have taught a worse lesson.

Coleridge was the only friend left who had the courage to speak freely to Wordsworth by way of criticism. After a few attempts Lamb had given it up, and even the keen hints half hidden in sportive language no longer occurred in his letters. He felt a little awed by Wordsworth's genius, and was willing to let him see it.

Robinson once ventured to ease his mind of a certain anxiety, but not directly to the poet. He expressed his misgivings to Dorothy, between whom and himself there had sprung up a delightful intimacy. No doubt he hoped she would in some discreet way communciate the matter to her brother. Writing about the classification of the poems in the projected complete edition of 1827—a subject on which a great deal of needless advice was being given, for Wordsworth did as he pleased in the end, and arranged them according to a system which nobody understood but himself—Robinson took his courage in both hands, and said:

"It is a sort of moral and intellectual suicide in your brother not to have continued his admirable series of poems 'dedicated to liberty'—he might add 'and public virtue.' . . . I assure you it gives me real pain when I think that some future commentator may possibly hereafter write: 'This great poet survived to the fifth decennary of the nineteenth century, but he appears to have died in the year 1814, as far as life consisted in an active sympathy with the temporary welfare of his fellow-creatures. He had written heroically and divinely against the tyranny of Napoleon, but was quite indifferent to all the successive tyrannies which disgraced the succeeding times.'"

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Here the passage as printed by Dr. Sadler in his edition of selections from Crabb Robinson ends; but in the original manuscript, under date of February, 1826, it continues as follows:

" ' The Spaniards, the moment they were under the yoke of the most odious and contemptible tyrant that ever breathed, ceased to be objects of interest. The Germans who emancipated themselves were most ungratefully neglected by their sovereigns and the poet. The Greeks began a war as holy as that of the Spaniards. He was silent. He had early manifested a feeling for the negroes, and the poet did honour to his friend Clarkson. That source of sympathetic tears was dried up. A new field of enterprise was opened in America. The poet's eye was not a prophetic one. There is proof that he was alive about 1823, and when the new churches were built in London, but otherwise he took no care about any of the events of the day. He had, indeed, the wisdom and dignity not to expose himself to the imputations, exaggerated by party feeling, but not unfounded, which were heaped upon the Laureat.'

" I had no intention, I assure you, to make so long a parenthesis or indeed to advert to such a subject, and I wish you not to read any part of this letter which might be thought impertinent. Nothing, as you know, equals the love and admiration I bear to your brother's poetical character. And I am not unfrequently mortified when I am unable to repel the bitter and scornful attacks which low-minded adversaries make against him. I am, however, more pained when I hear the lamentations of some of the most excellent persons I know, that occasions should be given to the revilings of the baser sort. In favour of my affectionate attachment to your brother's fame, do forgive this digression, and, as I said above, keep it to yourself."

This remarkable prophecy has been more than fulfilled. The date of Wordsworth's " death " has been fixed by some " commentators " as early as 1807. Others, less exacting, grant him six or seven years more. A few, mindful of the austere beauty of some of the later sonnets, and not insensible to the artistic finish of almost everything that proceeded from his pen, prefer to think that, like a graceful shoot growing from the

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mighty trunk of a pollarded elm, an excellent minor poet survived for very many years the *vates sacer*.

Robinson accepted a pressing invitation to visit the Lakes on his way home from a trip in Ireland and Scotland in the autumn of 1826, but, as Dora Wordsworth was at that time critically ill, he did not stay at Rydal Mount, and had only a few days of Wordsworth's company. They walked on Loughrigg Fell, and compared the beauty of the English and Scottish lakes with those of Killarney. Wordsworth showed him (October 5) the field he had bought, meaning to build on it if compelled to leave the Mount. "He also," says the diarist, "pointed out the beautiful spring, a description of which is to be an introduction to a portion of his great poem, and contains a poetical view of water as an element in the composition of our globe. The passages he read appear to be of the very highest excellence."

The delicate question on which Robinson had touched in his letter to Dorothy was probably not mentioned, though Robinson had a great deal of honest bluntness with all his amiability and tact. He had said some very bold things to judges on the bench, but would scarcely have had the hardihood to rebuke Wordsworth on Loughrigg. A safer topic was the distribution of poems in the new edition, and perhaps Robinson reported Lamb's remark: "There is only one good order, and that is the order in which they were written—that is, a history of the poet's mind."*

Robinson saw much of William Blake in the last three years of the latter's life,† and always found that the mention of Wordsworth's name awoke in him the visionary faculty. We can see the inspired old man, in his bare lodgings, shabbily dressed, relating to the shrewd lawyer his conversations with Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, and ranging in this august company the author of the "Intimations of Immortality."

* H. C. Robinson's "Diary," II. 319 (Sadler's 3-vol. ed.).

† Blake died August 12, 1827, and Robinson saw him for the last time on February 2.

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"He is now old" (sixty-eight), wrote Robinson on February 10, 1825, "pale, with a Socratic countenance and an expression of great sweetness, though with something of languor about it except when animated, and then he has about him an air of inspiration. . . . When he said 'my visions,' it was in the ordinary unemphatic tone in which we speak of every-day matters. . . . He professes to be very hostile to Plato, and reproaches Wordsworth with being, not a Christian, but a Platonist. . . . He asked me whether Wordsworth believed in the Scriptures. On my replying in the affirmative, he said he had been much pained by reading the Introduction to The Excursion. It brought on a fit of illness. The passage was produced, and read:

> Jehovah—with his thunder and the choir
> Of shouting angels, and the empyreal thrones—
> I pass them unalarmed.

This '*pass them unalarmed*' greatly offended Blake. Does Mr. Wordsworth think his mind can surpass Jehovah? I tried to explain this passage in a sense in harmony with Blake's own theories, but failed, and Wordsworth was finally set down as a Pagan; but still with high praise, as the greatest poet of the age."

Flaxman, that other mystical genius, had expressed to Robinson similar misgivings about the same passage. Blake had a short and ready way with men who turned aside from "God" to "Nature," the two opposite principles in the universe as he conceived of it. "Dante," he declared calmly, "was an Atheist—a mere politician, busied about this world, as Milton was, till in his old age he returned to God, whom he had had in his childhood." "I am to continue my visits," Robinson concluded, "and to read to him Wordsworth, of whom he seems to entertain a high idea." On December 27 Robinson wrote:

"I read to him Wordsworth's incomparable ode, which he heartily enjoyed. But he repeated, 'I fear Wordsworth loves nature, and nature is the work of the Devil. The Devil is in us as far as we are nature.' . . . The parts of Wordsworth's ode which Blake most enjoyed were the most obscure—at all events, those which I least like and comprehend."

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Robinson called on Blake again on February 18, 1826, and found him still unsatisfied. "He gave me in his own handwriting a copy of Wordsworth's Preface to The Excursion." At the end of this the mystic had written some curious lines indicating his horror that a man could speak of Jehovah as a very inferior object of contemplation. He admitted that some of Wordsworth's writings proceeded from the Holy Spirit, but considered others to be the Devil's work. In the letter to Dorothy Wordsworth already cited, Robinson wrote of Blake:

"I gave your brother some poems in MS. by him, and they interested him, as well they might; for there is an affinity between them, as there is between the regulated imagination of a wise poet and the incoherent outpourings of a dreamer. . . . After what I have said, Mr. Wordsworth will not be flattered by knowing that Blake deems him the *only poet* of the age, nor much alarmed by hearing that Blake thinks that he is often in his works an Atheist. Now, according to Blake, Atheism consists in worshipping the natural world, which same natural world, properly speaking, is nothing real, but a mere illusion produced by Satan."

And after recounting the conversations from which the above quotations were made, he concludes:

"It is since then that I have lent Blake all the works which he but imperfectly knew. I doubt whether what I have written will excite your and Mr. Wordsworth's curiosity, but there is something so delightful about the man; though in great poverty, he is so perfect a gentleman, with such genuine dignity and independence—scorning presents, and of such native delicacy in words, etc., etc., etc.—that I have not scrupled promising to bring him and Mr. Wordsworth together. He expressed his thanks strongly, saying: 'You do me honour. Mr. Wordsworth is a great man. Besides, he may convince me I am wrong about him; I have been wrong before now,' etc. Coleridge has visited Blake, and, I am told, talks finely about him."

The convictions, however singular, of this rare spirit demand our entire respect, and are of value to us in

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proportion as they conflict with all our ways of thinking. In his Reminiscences for the year 1827, Robinson wrote:

"I lent Blake the 8vo. edition, 2 vols., of Wordsworth's poems, which he had in his possession at the time of his death. They were sent me then. I did not at first recognize the pencil notes as his, and was on the point of rubbing them out when I made the discovery. In the fly-leaf, Vol. I., under the words *Poems referring to the Period of Childhood*, the following is written: 'I see in Wordsworth the natural man rising up against the spiritual man continually, and then he is no poet, but a heathen philosopher, at enmity with all true poetry or inspiration.' On the lines

> **And I could wish my days to be**
> **Bound each to each by natural piety,**

he wrote: 'There is no such thing as natural piety, because the natural man is at enmity with God.' On the verses To H. C., Six Years Old (p. 43) the comment is: 'This is all in the highest degree imaginative and equal to any poet—but not superior. I cannot think that real poets have any competition. None are greatest in the kingdom of heaven. It is so in poetry.' At the bottom of p. 44, On the Influence of Natural Objects, is written: 'Natural objects always did and now do weaken, deaden, and obliterate imagination in me. Wordsworth must know that what he writes valuable is not to be found in nature. Read Michael Angelo's Sonnet, Vol. II., p. 179.' That is, the one beginning

> **No mortal object did these eyes behold**
> **When first they met the lucid light of thine."**

Robinson found that Blake had written, regarding Wordsworth's Essay Supplementary to the Preface: "I do not know who wrote these Prefaces. They are very mischievous, and directly contrary to Wordsworth's own practice."

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CHAPTER XXXI

SOCIETY AND TRAVEL

THE death of Sir George Beaumont, on February 7, 1827, made the first gap in the circle of friends who had accompanied Wordsworth through middle life. The loss was deeply felt. Sir George had about him a sweet dignity which caused men in his presence to speak and act as becomingly as they could.*

He was a sincere and accomplished lover of the arts. His kindness and generosity to Wordsworth should never be forgotten. But wherever the latter deferred to his taste in matters of poetry, the result was unfortunate. To a desire to please Sir George we must attribute, in many of Wordsworth's poems, a pietistic flavour, a shrinking conservatism, a return to a conventional style, and a general air of having been written by one who felt himself to be old. As a final proof of friendship, Sir George bequeathed to the poet an annuity of £100 "to defray the expenses of a yearly tour."† The form of the gift was well chosen, for Wordsworth had truly said that wandering was his passion. His library, for example, which was ill provided with works of modern fiction and poetry, was remarkably rich in books of travel, some of them ancient and rare.

The period of five years which followed the publication

* Coleridge, writing in his note-book at Syracuse, October 5, 1804, exclaims: "Coleridge! Coleridge! will you never learn to appropriate your conversation to your company! Is it not desecration, indelicacy, and a proof of great weakness, and even vanity, to talk to etc., etc., etc., as if you [were talking to] Wordsworth or Sir G. Beaumont?" ("Anima Poetæ," p. 67).

† Mrs. Coleridge, in a letter to Poole, July, 1827 (original in the British Museum), says that Sir George left to her and Southey £100 apiece, and to Wordsworth £100 and an annuity of £100 for life.

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of " Ecclesiastical Sketches " ended in the issue of a collective edition of Wordsworth's poems, including " The Excursion," the preface to the second edition of " Lyrical Ballads," and the Essay Supplementary, in five handsome volumes. The dedication is to Sir George Beaumont. Longman was the publisher, the date 1827, and the price forty-five shillings.

The periodical correcting of old poems for new editions gave work to the whole household. The state of Wordsworth's eyes preventing him from holding the pen, an immense deal of drudgery fell upon his wife, his sister, his daughter, and Sara Hutchinson. As far back as 1816, Charles Lamb had hinted that perhaps he leaned too heavily upon his loving helpers: " Your manual graphy is terrible, dark as Lycophron.... I should not wonder if the constant making out of such Paragraphs is the cause of that weakness in Mrs. W.'s Eyes, as she is tenderly pleased to express it. Dorothy, I hear, has mounted spectacles; so you have deoculated two of your dearest relations in life."* The labour of preparing the edition of 1827 was enormous, when added to the nervous strain of ministering to the mental and moral needs of a man suffering from depression of spirits. Moreover, among several suitors for Dora's hand, the one favoured by her was Edward Quillinan, and for many years Wordsworth refused to give his consent, or gave it with such painful reluctance that the marriage did not take place until 1841. From Wordsworth's letters to Allan Cunningham, the Scottish poet, who assisted Chantrey, the sculptor, we learn that he was much occupied, in the spring of 1828, with distributing copies of his bust to various friends. This bust had been made by Chantrey about 1820 for Sir George Beaumont.

He was also busy defending himself against the enterprise of the editors of poetical annuals. At first he refused to contribute to these gift-books, and his consistency was put to a strain when the high prices offered to him for a few pages of verse caused him to change

* E. V. Lucas, " Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 485.

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his mind. Thereafter a number of his poems appeared in " keepsakes " of one sort or another.

It is most pleasant, and surprising, to learn that in June and July, 1828, Wordsworth and Coleridge were once more fellow-travellers. The arrival of a letter from S. T. C. had become a rare event at Rydal Mount. His name seldom occurs in the Wordsworth correspondence during the twenties. Yet now the two poets, with Dora Wordsworth, spent about six weeks together in Flanders, the Rhine Valley, and Holland. They went, as Wordsworth wrote to his brother, the Master of Trinity, " by steam from London to Ostend, by barge to Ghent, by diligence to Brussels, by diligence to Namur, stopping four hours at the field of Waterloo, up the Meuse (*en voiture*), to Dinant and back to Namur; thence by barge down the Meuse to Liège, *en voiture* to Spa, and by the same conveyance to Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne; thence to Godesberg [where Crabb Robinson's friends, Mr. and Mrs. Aders, had a villa], two leagues above Bonn on the Rhine." They stayed there a week, and then went up the river to St. Goar and Bingen. Returning by boat, they stayed another week at Godesberg, and thence dropped down the river to Nijmegen. By barge and carriage they visited Arnheim, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leyden, The Hague, Delft, and Rotterdam, whence they went by steamboat to Antwerp, then by diligence to Ghent, by barge to Ostend, and so to London.*

An Irish traveller, Thomas Colley Grattan, has set down with great fulness, in a curious and rare book,† his memories of three days, beginning June 25, 1828, spent with the two poets in the neighbourhood of Brussels and Namur. He was introduced to them at Brussels. He says of Coleridge:

* The trip began later than June 18. On that date Robinson breakfasted with Aders in London, and Wordsworth and Coleridge were present, the former " chiefly busied about making arrangements for his journey into Holland," the latter " as usual, very eloquent in his dreamy monologues."

† " Beaten Paths, and Those who Trod Them," 1862, Vol. II., pp. 107-145.

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"He was about five feet five inches in height, of a full and lazy appearance, but not actually stout. He was dressed in black, and wore short breeches, buttoned and tied at the knees, and black silk stockings. And in this costume (the same that he describes himself to have worn in his earliest voyages and travels in the year 1798) he worked along, in public coaches or barges, giving the idea of his original profession, an itinerant preacher. His face was extremely handsome, its expression placid and benevolent. His mouth was particularly pleasing, and his grey eyes, neither large nor prominent, were full of intelligent softness. His hair, of which he had plenty, was entirely white. His forehead and cheeks were unfurrowed, and the latter showed a healthy bloom. . . . Wordsworth was a perfect antithesis to Coleridge—tall, wiry, harsh in features, coarse in figure, inelegant in looks. He was roughly dressed in a long brown *surtout*, striped duck trousers, fustian gaiters, and thick shoes. He more resembled a mountain farmer than a 'Lake poet.' His whole air was unrefined and unprepossessing. . . . There was a total absence of affectation or egotism; not the least effort at display, or assumption of superiority over any of those who were quite prepared to concede it to him. He seemed satisfied to let his friend and fellow-traveller take the lead, with a want of pretension rarely found in men of literary reputation far inferior to his; while there was something unobtrusively amiable in his bearing towards his daughter."

Grattan was carried off his feet by the flow of Coleridge's enthusiastic talk. Wordsworth's remarks, by contrast, appeared at first commonplace; but their truth and good sense gradually became apparent. At Waterloo and Quatre Bras, "Wordsworth keenly inspected the field of battle, insatiably curious." At Namur, Coleridge was content to enjoy the general impression; Wordsworth counted the arches of the bridge "with the accuracy and hardness of a stone-cutter." Wordsworth took the lead in practical matters, making inquiries and keeping in the van. On Grattan's noting his imperfect use of French, Wordsworth told him that "five-and-twenty years previously he understood and spoke it well, but that his abhorrence of the Revolutionary excesses made him resolve if possible to forget the language altogether,

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and that for a long time he had not read nor spoken a word of it." Near Dinant the Irish author took a long stroll with Wordsworth, and naturally, since he had previously regarded him as a poet full of "vapoury abstractions," was surprised to find him quite level-headed. "There was," he says, "an inflexible, matter-of-fact manner and spirit in all he said, which came out in a rather hoarse and harsh *burr* that made it disagreeable as well as unimpressive." They talked about Byron, whom Wordsworth declared to have been greatly overrated. He doubted whether Byron had been a man of much originality of mind.

By a strange chance, the travellers had only just escaped the inquisitorial eye of Mr. Grattan, when they fell under the observation of another note-taking young author—Julian Charles Young. He was staying at Mrs. Aders's house, when, in the dead of night, the two poets arrived. His account of the scene next morning is so lively that there must be truth in it, though the personal and literary judgments of this youth of twenty-two need not much concern us.* Next morning as Young sat in the drawing-room, an old gentleman, with a large quarto volume under his arm, entered. Young rose and bowed, but his salute was not returned.

"I began," says he, "to conjecture what manner of man he was. His general appearance would have led me to suppose him a dissenting minister. His hair was long, white, and neglected; his complexion was florid, his features were square, his eyes watery and hazy, his brow broad and massive, his build uncouth, his deportment grave and abstracted. He wore a white starchless neck-cloth tied in a limp bow, and was dressed in a shabby suit of dusky black. His breeches were unbuttoned at the knee, his sturdy limbs were encased in stockings of lavender-coloured worsted, his feet were thrust into well-worn slippers, much trodden down at heel. In this ungainly attire he paced up and down, up and down, and round and round, a saloon sixty feet square, with head bent forward and shoulders stooping, absently musing and muttering to himself, and occasion-

* "Memoir of Charles Mayne Young, with Extracts from the Journal of J. C. Young." 1871.

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ally clutching to his side his ponderous tome, as if he feared it might be taken from him. I confess my young spirit chafed under the wearing quarter-deck monotony of his promenade, and, stung by the cool manner in which he ignored my presence, I was about to leave him in undisputed possession of the field, when I was diverted from my purpose by the entrance of another gentleman, whose kindly smile and courteous recognition of my bow encouraged me to keep my ground, and promised me some compensation for the slight put upon me by his precursor. He was dressed in a brown holland blouse; he held in his left hand an alpenstock (on the top of which he had placed the broad-brimmed 'wide-awake' he had just taken off), and in his right a spring of apple-blossom overgrown with lichen. His cheeks were glowing with the effects of recent exercise. So noiseless had been his entry that the peripatetic philosopher, whose back was turned to him at first, was unaware of his presence. But no sooner did he discover it than he shuffled up to him, grasped him by both hands, and backed him bodily into a neighbouring arm-chair. Having secured him safely there, he made 'assurance doubly sure' by hanging over him, so as to bar his escape, while he delivered his testimony on the fallacy of certain of Bishop Berkeley's propositions, in detecting which, he said, he had opened up a rich vein of original reflection. Not content with cursory criticism, he plunged profoundly into a metaphysical lecture, which, but for the opportune intrusion of our fair hostess and her young lady friend, might have lasted until dinner-time. It was then, for the first time, I learned who the party consisted of, and I was introduced to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and his daughter Dora."

"The reported presence of two such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth," Young continues, "soon attracted to Mrs. Aders's house all the illuminate of Bonn—Niebuhr, Becker, Augustus Schlegel, and many others. . . . Schlegel praised Scott's poetry. Coleridge decried it, stating that no poet ever lived, of equal eminence, whose writings furnished so few quotable passages. Schlegel then praised Byron. Coleridge immediately tried to depreciate him. 'Ah,' said he, 'Byron is a meteor which will but blaze and rove and die; Wordsworth there' (pointing to him) 'is a star luminous and fixed. During the first furore of Byron's reputation, the

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sale of his works was unparalleled, while that of Wordsworth's was insignificant, and now each succeeding year, in proportion as the circulation of Byron's works has fallen off, the issue of Wordsworth's poems has steadily increased.' "

Wordsworth had to listen to these things, for as a rule Coleridge had all the talk to himself. Young is pleased to remark:

" I must say I never saw any manifestation of small jealousy between Coleridge and Wordsworth; which, considering the vanity possessed by each, I thought uncommonly to the credit of both. I am sure they entertained a thorough respect for each other's intellectual endowments."

Young gives several bits of welcome testimony as to Wordsworth's simplicity and kindliness of manner. He was evidently more genial *en voyage* than when he had to endure the prying attentions of visitors at Rydal Mount.

" If Wordsworth condescended to converse with me, he spoke to me as if I were his equal in mind, and made me pleased and proud in consequence. If Coleridge held me by the button, for lack of fitter audience, he had a talent for making me feel *his* wisdom, and my own stupidity, so that I was miserable and humiliated by the sense of it."

Strange to say, the only records Wordsworth left of this journey are two short poems of mediocre quality, " A Jewish Family " and " Incident at Bruges." From Coleridge we have only three gay epigrams on the two-and-seventy stenches of Cologne, and " the thing called Gripes " that comes from Rhenish wine.

John Wordsworth, having taken orders, was in 1828 curate of a parish at Whitwick, near Coleorton Hall. His aunt Dorothy spent a large part of this year and the next with him. In 1829 he received from Lord Lonsdale the living of Moresby, near Whitehaven. Young William was not so easily settled, having an inability to learn mathematics, and after trying several schools was sent to live in a German home at Hamburg.

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The last of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals begins June 26, 1828, and contains notes made during a visit to the Isle of Man where she was the guest of Mrs. Wordsworth's brother, Henry Hutchinson. In reading it we are struck once more with the directness of her way of seeing things. In looking about a market-place, a harbour, a hillside, or a village street, her quick eye caught the striking features of the scene. No moody temper, no preoccupation, stood between her and what she saw. If reflections rose in her mind, they were the result, not the cause, of her impressions. The same happy heart was in her as of old, and the same enjoyment of life's never-ending spectacle. There is a little more independence of judgment than the earlier Journals show, and her power to seize the essentials is better trained; but otherwise no change is perceptible, and the reader feels that she was as well fitted as ever to walk beside a musing master of words and show him what to describe.

If ever a family had reason to be happy, it was the household at Rydal Mount. One cannot feel quite patient with its head, who lived in gloomy apprehension that his own death was near, and that his country was doomed to some awful fate. But when, early in 1829, the first stroke of a real calamity fell, it descended not on him, but on the most lively, cheerful, and courageous member of the family, on one, as sensitive as himself, who had resisted more bravely, but, as the event showed, less successfully, the encroachments of age. A mysterious ailment befell Dorothy Wordsworth. It is sometimes referred to as an inflammation. It has often been charged to overexertion in those long walks, which had been her delight.* The trouble was really of a nervous character. She recovered from the first attack, though her life was in danger. "What a shock that was to our poor hearts!" wrote Wordsworth to Crabb Robinson, April 6, 1829. "Were she to depart, the phase of my moon would be robbed of light to a degree that I have not courage to think of. During her illness we often

* Even in 1828 she planned to climb Helvellyn once more.

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thought of your high esteem for her goodness, and of your kindness towards her upon all occasions."* Up to this time she had never been seriously ill in her life, and for three years longer she enjoyed fairly good bodily health, with serenity of mind. Then the blow fell again, and after 1832 she remained an invalid. Even when a measure of physical strength returned, she suffered from a belief that she could not walk; and though the clouded mind shone forth at intervals, it was never free. She was still happy and thoughtful of others, but her reason was no longer in continuous command. I have seen letters from her, after her second illness, to members of the Marshall family, which, though fragmentary and evidently written in spite of great weakness, are full of her old kind love. She lived at Rydal Mount till her death in 1855.

A robin used to visit her in her room, and in fine weather she came out upon the terrace in a wheel-chair. For many years, at Christmas, which was her birthday, there came to Rydal Mount a hamper of game and a turkey, from her old friend who was once Jane Pollard, and she said Christmas stirred her heart. Her delightful book of travel in Scotland, which she had completed because urged thereto by her brother and Crabb Robinson, was not printed in her lifetime, and she was not allowed to gratify her desire to revisit Italy. But perhaps she knew, in her secret heart, that but for her two mighty poets would not have found or might not so soon have recognized the themes of their finest song.

Her brother's interests were ever her own, and so late as January 9, 1830, she wrote as follows, in a long letter to Charles and Mary Lamb:†

"His muscular powers are in no degree diminished. Indeed, I think he walks regularly more than ever, finding fresh air the best bracing to his weak eyes. He is still the crack skater on Rydal Lake, and as to climbing of mountains, the hardiest and the youngest are yet hardly a match for him. In composition I can perceive no failure, and his imagination seems as vigorous as in youth; yet he shrinks from his great work, and both

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 370. † *Ibid.*, III. 433.

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during the last and present winter has been employed in writing small poems. . . . My sister and I take every opportunity of pressing upon him the necessity of applying to his great work, and this he feels, resolves to do it, and again resolution fails. And now I almost fear habitually that it will be ever so."

There was occurring at this time, 1828, a spiritual event which would have given Wordsworth great encouragement had he known of it. The story is related, with singular straightforwardness, in John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography." At the age of twenty-two Mill had learned more of book-knowledge than perhaps any other youth of his age ever had done. He desired to be a reformer of the world. It seemed to him quite possible that the world might be reformed. Progress was his religion. But when he was in a state of depression from overwork, the fantastic thought forced itself upon him, that even when the world was thoroughly reformed, men might not be happy; it might even be that "the pleasures of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and depression, would cease to be pleasures." I fancy that this was an inadequate expression of a wider sense of want; that his soul, wearied with the continual exercise of analysis, craved some of that synthetic or expansive exercise which is the common and easy movement of poetic and mystical natures, or, to use the word in a narrow sense, of "religious" natures.

"This state of my thoughts and feelings," he says, "made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the Autumn of 1828) an important event in my life. I took up the collection of his poems from curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope. In the worst period of my depression, I had read through the whole of Byron (then new to me), to try whether a poet, whose peculiar department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings, could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no good from this reading, but the reverse. . . . But while Byron was exactly what did not suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what did."

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He refers especially to the miscellaneous poems in the edition of 1815. They addressed themselves to his love of rural objects and natural scenery. But this was not all.

"What made Wordsworth's poems," he says, "a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings, which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence. . . . The delight which these poems gave me proved that with culture of this sort there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis."

This was Mill's conversion, his change of heart. It had the typical features of a preliminary "conviction," if not of sin, at least of insufficiency, and a subsequent state of relief and restoration. No stronger testimony to Wordsworth's poetical value could have been rendered than this conquest of the ablest analytical mind, perhaps, in a whole generation of great Englishmen. Mill had, without much examination, accepted a narrow idea of poetry, which caused him to think that it was the philosophy, rather than the poetry of Wordsworth which helped him, and that Wordsworth was not really so clear an example of the poetic mind as Byron or Shelley; but his tribute to Wordsworth's poetic power is rendered only the more significant by being to this extent unconscious. Many persons well trained in science, but deficient in literature, are apt to expect from poetry only a rather violent æsthetic stimulus. The example of Mill—not, of course, that he was deficient in reading, though his sensuous enjoyment of it may have been

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slight—shows that there is one poet, at least, in whom they can taste finer and more varied pleasures, while at the same time admiring an almost scientific precision in his knowledge of nature and human life.

Three years later, in 1831, Mill saw something of Wordsworth, and it is gratifying to note that his opinion of the man in no wise fell behind his estimate of the poetry. Indeed, of judgments passed upon Wordsworth by persons who knew him only in the second half of his life, Mill's is by far the most important, and, considering who made it, the most favourable. It is set down at length in a letter to John Sterling, October 20 to 22, 1831.*

"I went this summer to the lakes, where I saw much splendid scenery, and also saw a great deal both of Wordsworth and Southey; and I must tell you what I think of them both. In the case of Wordsworth, I was particularly struck by several things. One was, the extensive range of his thoughts and the largeness and expansiveness of his feelings. This does not appear in his writings, especially his poetry, where the contemplative part of his mind is the only part of it that appears; and one would be tempted to infer from the peculiar character of his poetry that real life and the active pursuits of men (except of farmers and other country people) did not interest him. The fact, however, is that these very subjects occupy the greater part of his thoughts, and he talks on no subject more instructively than on states of society and forms of government. Those who best know him seem to be most impressed with the catholic character of his ability. I have been told that Lockhart has said of him that he would have been an admirable country attorney. Now a man who could have been either Wordsworth or a country attorney could certainly have been anything else which circumstances had led him to desire to be. The next thing that struck me was the extreme comprehensiveness and philosophic spirit which is in him. By these expressions I mean the direct antithesis of what the Germans most expressively call one-sidedness. Wordsworth seems always to know the pros and cons of every question; and when you think he strikes the

* "Letters of John Stuart Mill," I. 10.

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balance wrong it is only because you think he estimates erroneously some matter of fact. . . . Then when you get Wordsworth on the subjects which are peculiarly his, such as the theory of his own art (that is, if art is to be defined as the expression or embodying in words or forms of the highest and most refined parts of nature), no one can converse with him without feeling that he has advanced that great subject beyond any other man, being probably the first person who ever combined, with such eminent success in the practice of the art, such high powers of generalization and habits of meditation on its principles. Besides all this, he seems to me the best talker I ever heard (and I have heard several first-rate ones); and there is a benignity and kindliness about his whole demeanour which confirms what his poetry would lead one to expect, along with a perfect simplicity of character which is delightful in anyone, but most of all in a person of first-rate intellect. You see I am somewhat enthusiastic on the subject of Wordsworth, having found him still more admirable and delightful a person on a nearer view than I had figured to myself from his writings. . . . I was much pleased with the universality of his relish for all good poetry, however dissimilar to his own, and with the freedom and unaffected simplicity with which every person about him seemed to be in the habit of discussing and attacking any passage or poem in his works which did not please them. I also saw a great deal of Southey, who is a very different kind of man, very inferior to Wordsworth in the higher powers of intellect, and entirely destitute of his philosophic spirit, but a remarkably pleasing and likeable man."*

William Hazlitt died in 1830. Writing from Lowther Castle on September 26, Wordsworth said:† "There is another acquaintance of mine also recently gone—a

* Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge has told me an amusing yet pathetic anecdote, which illustrates the influence of Southey's character. Charles Lamb and two or three other men, of whom one was Basil Montagu, drove in a gig to Highgate to hear Coleridge discourse. His daughter Sara, who had been brought up at Greta Hall, and was thoroughly imbued with Southey's ideas, interrupted her father's monologue from time to time with the remark, "My uncle does not think so." S. T. C. would stop for a moment, as if hardly understanding, and then proceed quite unperturbed. On the way back to town in the gig, Lamb suddenly burst forth: "M-m-my uncle does not think so!"

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 437.

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person for whom I never had any love, but with whom I had for a short time a good deal of intimacy—I mean Hazlitt. . . . He was a man of extraordinary acuteness, but perverse as Lord Byron himself, whose *Life* by Galt I have been skimming since I came here." Writing from his brother's, Trinity Lodge, Cambridge, on November 26, 1830, he says: "We have a respectable show of blossom in poetry [*i.e.*, at the University]—two brothers of the name of Tennyson, one in particular not a little promising." The following February he writes from Rydal Mount: "We have had Dr. Arnold and his family staying his Christmas vacation at the foot of our hill." On July 20, 1830, he informs Sir Walter Scott of the engagement of his son John with Miss Curwen, a niece of Mr. Christian, a Manx deemster, who was a descendant of a character in "Peveril of the Peak." The marriage took place in October. Young William was settled that autumn as his sub-distributor of stamps at Carlisle, but there was some danger that the salary of this office would be reduced by the Radicals if the Reform bill passed. In August and September Wordsworth made a carriage tour in Ireland with James Marshall, member of Parliament for Leeds. He visited William Rowan Hamilton, professor of astronomy, at the Observatory, near Dublin, and saw the vale of Avoca, the Wicklow mountains, Killarney, Limerick, Cork, Wexford, Waterford, and much of the best scenery in the south and south-west. Dorothy wrote to Crabb Robinson, April 22, 1830:

"My brother has enjoyed his accustomed good health, and, though he passed his sixtieth birthday on the seventh of this month, is really as active, and in as good walking plight, as when we crossed the Alps in 1820. My sister, too, retains her strength and activity wonderfully."

Their dear friend Hartley Coleridge gave the Wordsworths much anxiety about this time. He was a simple, humble, kindly soul, a man of genius and full of strange lore, but eccentric and intemperate. They had provided lodgings for him in their neighbourhood. Everybody liked him, and he seemed to be comfortably

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settled. But having made a little money by his writings, he disappeared. Dorothy wrote sadly to Crabb Robinson that they heard of him as a vagrant, tramping the roads and sleeping in barns. It was her sad duty to report his doings to his mother.

Felicia Hemans came to Rydal Mount in July, 1830, and Professor Hamilton returned Wordsworth's visit in August. Professor John Wilson (Christopher North), with his daughter and two sons, spent the summer vacation of 1830 near Rydal, where he led the gaieties of the season and presided as steward at two regattas. It was a time of unusual social delight. Apart from his anxiety about the political crisis, Wordsworth enjoyed a return of cheerfulness. When the dark November days came, he defied them by riding his daughter's pony from Lancaster to Cambridge, stopping for a week at Coleorton. His equestrian powers were not sufficient to permit of his keeping his seat in the villages through which he travelled on Guy Fawkes's day, so he followed the precedent of his tour in Scotland with Coleridge, and led his charger past the guns, squibs, and bonfires. Dora, who was visiting her uncle, received her pony in good condition. He had proved a distant cousin of Pegasus, for two poems had been composed on the way, one of them in a storm.

Crabb Robinson, meanwhile, was revisiting the scenes of his youth in Germany, where he had a host of old friends and acquaintances. Among the latter was Goethe, with whom Robinson held long conversations about English literature. "He was not aware," wrote Robinson in his Reminiscences, "that I had not the courage to name the poet to whom I was and am most attached—Wordsworth; for I knew that there were too many dissonances of character between them." From Germany he had gone to Italy, where he saw something of Landor, of whose literary judgments—splenetic as usual—he gives this specimen: "Of Dante, about a seventieth part is good; of Ariosto, a tenth; of Tasso, not a line worth anything,—yes, *one* line. He declared almost all Wordsworth to be good."

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Lamb, now a "superannuated man," living in the suburbs but longing for the shows and shop-windows of London, had been trying to coax Wordsworth to town. He wrote to him:*

"From my den I return you condolence for your decaying sight, not for anything there is to see in the country, but for the miss of the pleasure of reading a London newspaper. The poets are as well to listen to, anything high may, nay must, be read out—you read it to yourself with an imaginary auditor—but the light paragraphs must be glid over by the proper eye, mouthing mumbles their gossamery substance. 'Tis these trifles I should mourn in fading sight. A newspaper is the single gleam of comfort I receive here, it comes from rich Cathay with tidings of mankind."

It appears that Wordsworth did go to London this winter, on his way from Cambridge to his brother's other residence, Buxted Rectory, near Uckfield, Sussex, and again on his return in February, but Lamb seems not to have seen him.

"I want to see the Wordsworths," he wrote on February 3, 1831,† "but I do not much like to be all night away. It is dull enough to be here together, but it is duller to leave Mary: in short, it is painful, and in a flying visit I should hardly catch them. I have no beds for them if they come down, and but a sort of a house to receive them in, yet I shall regret their departure unseen. I feel cramped and straiten'd every way. Where are they?"

In April Lamb was daily expecting Wordsworth, as we learn from a letter of the 13th, in Canon Ainger's collection, and summer had come before the traveller returned to Rydal Mount.

Henry Taylor, in a letter to Miss Fenwick, dated London, May, 1831,‡ tells a very satisfactory anecdote about the poet:

"I have seen a good deal more of Wordsworth," he writes, "than I ever saw before; I feel as if one could

* E. V. Lucas, "The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VII. 827.

† *Ibid.*, p. 866.

‡ "Correspondence of Henry Taylor," p. 38.

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have a great deal of regard for him. I have had three or four breakfasts for him, and he is as agreeable in society as he is admirable in the powers of talking, so perfectly courteous and well-bred and simple in his manners. He met Jeffrey the other day at Sir J. Mackintosh's and at Jeffrey's request they were introduced. Lockhart beheld the ceremony, and told me that Wordsworth played the part of a man of the world to perfection, much better than the smaller man, and did not appear to be conscious of anything having taken place between them before."

Writing at this time from Buxted, to Mr. and Mrs. John Kenyon,* Wordsworth gives a glimpse of his life there:

"I have left my brother's quiet fireside for the last two days to dine with two several magistrates at Uckfield, where, of course, I heard rather too much of obstinate juries (grand and petty),† burnings, poor rates, cash payments, and that everlasting incubus of universal agricultural distress. Five times have I dined while at Buxted at the table of an earl, and twice in the company of a prince. Therefore let you and Mrs. Kenyon prepare yourselves for something stately and august in my deportment and manners! But king, queen, prince, princess, dukes, etc., are common articles at Brighton, so that I must descend from my elevation, or pass for a downright Malvolio!"

One regrets every one of Wordsworth's lost opportunities to see Lamb. He needed more frequent absences from the adoring circle of women at Rydal, who sacrificed themselves to him so humbly. Lamb could ridicule his fears of a world-catastrophe and give him a little of his own high spirits. A certain dash of recklessness is a very desirable ingredient in every manly or truly religious character; and sometimes it was wanting in Wordsworth's. So too with admiration; it is becoming in a man to be occasionally

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 481.

† The Tories were much annoyed by the reluctance of juries to convict starving agricultural labourers for rioting and barn-burning, in protest against the reduction of wages, the use of farm-machinery, and other causes of distress.

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too indulgent. Comparing the letters of the two men to their various acquaintances, one is struck with the fact that there was always something to displease Wordsworth in the letter he was answering, whereas Lamb always found something to like. No doubt Wordsworth's carping was generally well-meant, but it hardly did as much good as Lamb's kindly praise.

He was soon afoot once more. In a note to Sir Walter Scott, dated September 16, 1831, he describes the manner of his march: "'There's a man wi' a veil, and a lass drivin',' exclaimed a little urchin, as we entered merry Carlisle a couple of hours ago, on our way to Abbotsford." The lass was his daughter Dora; the veil was a screen for his eyes; the horse and cart were predestined to trouble. His nephew Charles, afterwards Bishop of St. Andrews, was going ahead to meet Scott, and this was the beginning of a letter introducing him to that great man. Three days later (Lockhart says the 21st) began that last reunion, in which the feeling of hospitality roused Scott to shake off the fatal lethargy that was stealing over his outwearied mind and frame, and a sense of fellowship restored to Wordsworth the full possession of his poetic powers. The scene has been affectingly described by Lockhart.* It is, in some ways, the culminating passage of his great work. Wordsworth's own account, in the Fenwick note to "Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems," sets it very vividly before us:

"How sadly changed did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay, and hopeful, a few years before, when he said at the inn at Paterdale, in my presence, his daughter Anne also being there, with Mr. Lockhart, my own wife and daughter, and Mr. Quillinan, 'I mean to live till I am *eighty*, and I shall write as long as I live.' But to return to Abbotsford; the inmates and guests we found there were Sir Walter, Major Scott (his son), Anne Scott (his daughter), and Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart, Mr. Liddell, his Lady and Brother, and Mr. Allan the painter, and Mr. Laidlaw, a very old friend of Sir Walter's. One of Burns's sons, an officer in the

* "Life of Scott," X. 91.

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Indian service, had left the house a day or two before, and had kindly expressed his regret that he could not wait my arrival, a regret that I may truly say was mutual. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sang, and Mrs. Lockhart chanted old ballads to her harp; and Mr. Allan, hanging over the back of a chair, told and acted old stories in a humorous way. With this exhibition and his daughter's singing, Sir Walter was much amused, as indeed were we all as far as circumstances would allow.... On Tuesday morning Sir Walter Scott accompanied us, and most of the party to Newark Castle on the Yarrow. When we alighted from the carriages he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting those his favourite haunts. Of that excursion the verses *Yarrow Revisited* are a memorial.... On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheel of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream that there flows somewhat rapidly; a rich but sad light of rather a purple than a golden hue was spread over the Eildon Hills at that moment, and thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the Sonnet beginning—'A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain.' At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and in the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which upon the whole he had led. He had written in my daughter's Album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her, and while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence—"I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake: they are probably the last verses I shall ever write.' They show how much his mind was impaired, not by the strain of thought but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes: one letter, the initial S, had been omitted in the spelling of his own name.... Both the *Yarrow Revisited* and the 'Sonnet' were sent him before his departure from England."

Lockhart gives a brief but memorable account of how the two great men spent their last evening together,

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listening to his reading an incident of the old age of Cervantes.

Henry Taylor, the author of "Philip van Artevelde," paid a visit to the Lakes in the autumn of 1831, and, after passing some time with Southey and Wordsworth, spent several days with Lockhart, Sir Walter's son-in-law, and dined at Abbotsford. He told Scott that Wordsworth intended coming to see him later in the autumn. Sir Walter answered: "Wordsworth must come soon or he will not find me here." Taylor says:*

"Wordsworth and Scott dwelt in regions as far apart as it was possible for men to occupy who each covered so large a space. Neither, I should think, could appreciate the other in full measure; but Scott would perhaps go nearer to a full appreciation of Wordsworth than Wordsworth of Scott. . . . They were as little alike in their aspect as in their genius. The only thing common to both countenances was that neither expressed a limitation. . . . Scott's had a character of rusticity, Wordsworth's was a face which did not assign itself to any class. It was a hardy, weather-beaten old face, which might have belonged to a nobleman, a yeoman, a mariner, or a philosopher; for there was so much of the man that you lost sight of superadded distinctions. For my own part I should not, judging by his face, have guessed him to be a poet. To my eyes there was more of strength than refinement in the face. But I think he took a different view of it himself. Whatever view he took, if occasion arose, he would be sure to disclose it; for his thoughts went naked. . . . Perhaps what was wanting was only *physical* refinement. It was a rough grey face, full of rifts and clefts and fissures, and of which, someone said, you might expect lichens to grow."

Garrulous and wanting in self-control, Wordsworth certainly was, in his old age; but Taylor was mistaken in supposing that his thoughts went naked. He was, on the contrary, close-minded and by no means easily understood. Harriet Martineau, Wordsworth's neighbour for some years at Ambleside, came much nearer the mark when she spoke of his mind as "inaccessible"

* "Autobiography of Henry Taylor," p. 179.

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and "constitutionally isolated."* It was she, too, who found Godwin, of all men, cautious and even timid in his old age, and, very likely, in her comment, "I believe this is often the case, towards the close of life, with reformers who have suffered in their prime for their opinions," she was thinking of Wordsworth and Southey.

Leaving Abbotsford at noon on Thursday, September 22, the Wordsworths proceeded to Edinburgh, and thence, a few days later, to Callander. What the rest of their trip was like may be learned from the following letter, never before printed, from Dora to her mother. It has been communicated to me by Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, with kind permission to use it:

"BUNAW,
"*Friday, Oct. 7th* [1831].

"DEAREST MOTHER,

"Though you did not say in your letter directed here you wished to hear of us again, we flatter ourselves a letter will not be unacceptable; therefore we send you a report of our proceedings since we parted from Charles yesterday week at Callender. The morning as with you was dreadfully wet, but it ceased raining a little after 10, and off we set for Loch Earn head—the day beautiful for the country through which we had to pass—soft and grey and close with twirling vapours—but very bad for poor Naso, who the day before, when he only came 8 miles, had shown symptoms of fatigue. However, we reached Loch Earn head, where we dined, and proceeded to Killin at lime-cart pace, Father walking most of the way.† It was all but pitch-dark when we arrived, but I have to thank Naso's slowness for an impression which must be even more lasting than my first introduction to the Rhine. You all know MacNab's burial place and the roaring river, and can imagine it seen for the first time at that hour. I think, Aunt W., you, too, came upon it for the first time in the dark.‡

"We were up very early next morning, and had the

* Harriet Martineau's "Autobiography," I. 386.

† Doune to Callander, eight miles; Callander to Loch Earn head, fourteen miles; Loch Earn head to Killin, seven and a half miles.

‡ See Dorothy Wordsworth's "Journals," Vol. II., p. 75 (Eversley Edition).

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most beautiful views of Loch Tay, etc., from the hill above the Manse. Off again after breakfast for Tyndrum; 3 miles an hour was thought superexcellent travelling, Father walking most of the way. A beautiful drive we had, tho' in momentary expectation of Naso's coming down. The collar we discovered had hurt him a little, so, this added to his fatigue, we thought Bunaw never could be reached. 'Bunaw,' 'Bunaw,' was cried for with as much earnestness as even Willy called for 'cabbage.' (Even when at Edinburgh we had tried to buy another horse, but could not succeed, and enquired for one at every village we came to.) We found the house at Tyndrum full of funeral people, so we were obliged to make my bedroom serve as sitting-room too. Next morning it poured down with rain—about midday it faired a little, so off again for Dalmally at lime-cart pace, Father walking almost all the way. Tremendous shower, but cleared off before we descended into the vale of Dalmally, and nothing could surpass the beauty of this descent—a glorious setting sun—the heights of Cruachin now veiled in mist, now standing forth in all their majesty. Naso's slowness again profited us, for had we come at a tolerably decent pace we should have been too early for this splendid sunset. Next day we were five hours in coming from Dalmally hither, 12 miles,* but this did not signify, the day being tolerably, indeed very, fine except for a few heavy showers, and the road so very striking. Soon after quitting Stirling we had determined to leave Naso behind, and, of course, before we got here this determination did not admit of a doubt. Mr. Fell says it can be kept without the slightest inconvenience here, and he doubts not he can sell it in the spring. Well, it was Sunday afternoon when we arrived here. Tuesday we found was the steamboat day to Mull. Monday we employed in seeing as much as we could of this grand neighbourhood. Tuesday morning Mr. Fell drove us to Oban in his Chandry. Such a pretty spot! The boat expected at 12, but did not arrive till between 5 and 6. At Mull by ½ past 7. Dreadfully sick—found "The Lady" and 5 of her children very merry and playing and dancing in the drawing-room, the Colonel gone to adjudge prizes at a cattle show 30 miles off—an express was sent for him, and he was with us next day before noon in spite

* Killin to Tyndrum, eighteen miles; Tyndrum to Dalmally, twelve miles; Dalmally to Bunaw, twelve miles.

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of pouring rain and stormy wind—we could but stay one entire day, as no steamboat would ply again till Tuesday, too late for us. This we all regretted much, but no help. I will tell you all about them and their place, etc., when we meet. At present you must be content with knowing that nothing could surpass *their* kindness, and *we* only found our visit too short. Here we could hear nothing of a horse; in fact, the Colonel has been long on the look-out for a beast just like the one we want; he most kindly offered to winter ours, and desires if it is the least in the way here he may be sent over to Mull, and the Colonel thinks he may buy it for himself; he means to call here to look at it some day when passing this way. Lucky people, are we not, to have two such homes for our fatigued horse?

"Owing to contrary winds, we did not leave Mull till 11, two hours later than the time, and reached Oban at 1, not the least sick tho' sea very rough (it was quite smooth when I was so ill crossing). Here, as settled, we found the Chandry and a man, ready to take us to Ballyhulish. Of course, it was too late to get so far that night, but we had a letter from our Mull friends to Sir John Campbell of Airds, where we might be lodged that night, but before we reached Connel ferry the rain came down in such torrents we thought it best to come on to Bunaw, not liking to arrive at a perfect stranger's, wet and dirty, and in the dark, and unexpected, too; and moreover than that, with but poor prospect of a better to-morrow. In spite of the rain, we went down to Dunstaffnage Castle, which lost much by near inspection. We had, however, something for our trouble—the sight of a cannon washed up from the Spanish Armada, fresh looking to our *ignorant* eyes, as if made yesterday. We got here about ½ past 5, intending, should the day prove tolerable, to be off for Glen Coe by 7, but, alas! it was worse than ever. After dinner it cleared a little, but not sufficiently to justify our setting off for Airds—further, of course, we could not get, and lucky we did not go, for Father and I taking a walk (to look at a horse which was named as *possibly likely* to suit us, but will not), were caught in a tremendous shower, and now it is raining and storming furiously, and we have little hopes for to-morrow, and Father has just been saying he thinks we must make the best of our way homewards; but we are in a puzzle about the carriage; we cannot get a horse, and really Naso is

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not fit to travel. From change of stables I suppose he has caught a bad cold; he is better to-day, but, of course, much pulled down. Had it been summer we would without hesitation have sent the carriage by sea to Ulverston, which Mr. Fell tells us can easily be done, but at this time of year their sailing is so uncertain it may be three months before we get it; and what will James say to our returning without horse or carriage? But he may depend upon every care being taken of both, and harness too. I think it will end by the carriage being sent in one of Mr. Harrison's vessels, and our making our way home as we can, though I confess I don't much like our bonny Phaeton being trusted to the stormy winds and waves. N.B. Observe Naso's failure was entirely owing to want of strength from his youth, and we were very gentle with him; after leaving Edinburgh he did not travel on an average *15* miles *a day—no, not so much, as we can prove, and before not 20, certainly not,* nay, not above *10*, including days' rests, of course. By hook or by crook, God willing, we shall be at Carlisle on the 20th, and we will do the best we can for carriage, etc.

"Father joins me in congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. H. [Harrison] on the birth of a son, but from his own experience agrees with Mr. H. in thinking that Daughters are much more useful, and consequently a more desirable article. Pray thank Mr. Harrison for the shelter we have found under his roof, and that help in our difficulties we stood in need of. Mr. Fell has been as kind as possible. This from 'himself,' and he has, I know, much more to say on the subject, but he is hammering at a horrid sonnet, and he cannot give me his ear for a moment. These we send cost him very little trouble, and his eyes are wonderfully well considering he *will* work. . . . They have all been written since the day we parted from Charles.

"And now you may be weary of me. Love to everyone, and treble distilled to dear naughty E. Cookson, to my children a hundred and 50 kisses, and twice as many loves. How I wish they could have been with me at the secessional school at Edinburgh! and did they know what Mrs. Campbell's *little* girls did *every day* they would blush for the little I give them to do. I really felt quite ashamed; we must work very hard when I return; Mary more especially, I mean.

"The night is most unpromising; I fear no Glen Coe

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for me this time. We had a beautiful morning for crossing from Mull, saw this coast to great advantage; the rain did not come on till about ½ past 12. Oban is as sweet a little spot as one could wish to see, especially when first seen as we did from Bunaw; it does not look so well approached by water.

"Again love to each and all. We are very sorry to hear of Willy's headaches. How would he have liked driving about 80 miles at the quick pace of 3 miles an hour (that, too, very good travelling considered), and the horse tripping at least once or twice in every mile, and latterly much oftener? his choice and Father's! Petticoats had nothing to do here!

"Kindest love to all,

"Your very affectᵉ

"DORA WORDSWORTH."

"Naso is an excellent feeder. He was never once off his food on the journey, and even his bad cold does not appear to have affected his appetite, and we have no fault to find with him, as gentle and tractable a creature as can be. It was our fault putting a child to man's work. Write to us by return of post at Post Office, Glasgow. Mr. Fell, who is just come in from Oban, begs his kindest regards to his Uncle and Aunt."

Mr. Gordon Wordsworth adds the following notes:

"Within this letter Dora W. has transcribed six sonnets, numbered 1 to 6.

1.—No. II. in the group 'Yarrow Revisited' (1835)—unchanged.

2.—V.

3.—III.: D. W. gives lines 3 and 4:

> Spot where the Hare, with both eyes closed, might sleep,
> And if so minded, Fairy companies.

And in line 7 'lonely' has been printed 'lowly.'

4.—VI., unchanged. The last word of line 9 is unmistakably 'quest.'

5.—IX.: D. W. gives lines 1 and 2:

> This land of rainbows and empurpled mists
> That tapestry the deep glen's craggy walls,

6.—XI., unchanged.

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" At the foot of Sonnet 1 D. W. has written: 'To be written in my little book after Sir Walter's verses.'

" At the foot of 4: 'At Loch Katerine, and also among the rocks of the cataract of the Dochhart near Killin, we were particularly struck with the rich and wild beauty of the aspens, the depending spray of which looked exactly like the tassels of the laburnum in full bloom.'

" At the foot of 6: 'These peaks are two, and rise at the head of the lake, as you will see by looking at a picture which Mr. Harrison has, done by his sister, taken from the very point where these two sonnets were first conceived.'

" Her sixth sonnet Dora Wordsworth has entitled 'Composed in the same place' (as her fifth). When published, the title ran, 'In the Sound of Mull,' and the sonnet on the Dunolly 'Eagles' was placed as No. X. between the two. No. XI. seems to have been conceived in the Glen of Loch Etive, and composed on the passage to or from Mull.

" Beneath the six sonnets Dora W. has written: 'You will please to take care of these Gentlemen, as we have no fair copy of them.'

" By this letter we can follow the movements of the writer and her Father for a portion of the tour. They appear to have slept on Wednesday, September 28, at Callander, September 29 at Killin, September 30 at Tyndrum, October 1 at Dalmally, October 2 and 3 at Bunawe, October 4 and 5 at Colonel Campbell's on Mull, October 6 and 7 at Bunawe."

The discrepancy between Lockhart and Wordsworth as to the date of the latter's visit to Abbotsford has been set at rest by Bishop Charles Wordsworth in his "Annals of my Early Life" (1891), pp. 115-119. There can be no doubt that Wordsworth and his daughter arrived at noon on Monday, September 19, were taken by Scott to Yarrow on the 20th, and to Melrose on the 21st, that they departed for Edinburgh at noon on Thursday, the 22nd, and that their host set off for London and Naples on the 23rd. It is a noteworthy coincidence that Sir Walter Scott died on September 21 in the following year, 1832.

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The ramblers arrived at home on October 20, and two days later Wordsworth wrote to Basil Montagu:*

"Travelling agrees with me wonderfully. I am as much Peter Bell as ever, and since my eyelids have been so liable to inflammation, after much reading especially, I find nothing so feeding to my mind as change of scene and rambling about; and my labours, such as they are, can be carried on better in the fields and on the roads than anywhere else."

A few days later, in a letter to Professor Hamilton,† he paid the following just and large-minded tribute to Scott:

"You will naturally wish to hear something of Sir Walter Scott, and particularly of his health. I found him a good deal changed within the last three or four years, in consequence of some shocks of the apoplectic kind, but his friends say that he is very much better; and the last accounts, up to the time of his going on board, were still more favourable. I trust the world and his friends may be hopeful, with good reason, that the life and faculties of this man—who has during the last six-and-twenty years diffused more innocent pleasure than ever fell to the lot of any human being to do in his own lifetime—may be spared. Voltaire, no doubt, was full as extensively known, and filled a larger space, probably, in the eye of Europe; for he was a great theatrical writer (which Scott has not proved himself to be), and miscellaneous to such a degree that there was something for all classes of readers; but the pleasure afforded by his writings—with the exception of some of his tragedies and minor poems—was not pure, and in this Scott is greatly his superior."

Before the end of October there came a welcome visitor to Rydal Mount in the person of the Rev. Robert Jones. Dorothy had described him in advance to Mrs. Clarkson as follows:

"In October we expect Mr. Jones, the companion of my brother forty years ago over the Alps. He looks back to that journey as the golden and sunny spot in his life. It would delight you to hear the pair talk of

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 463. † *Ibid.*, 467.

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their adventures. My brother, active, lively, and almost as strong as ever on a mountain top; Jones, fat and roundabout and rosy, and puffing and panting while he climbs the little hill from the road to our house. Never was there a more remarkable contrast; yet time seems to have strengthened the attachment of the native of Cambrian mountains to his Cumbrian friend."

Of personal and domestic matters in 1832 there is little to record. On June 25 Wordsworth wrote from Moresby to Professor Hamilton:*

"My dear sister has been languishing more than seven months in a sick-room, nor dare I or any of her friends entertain a hope that her strength will ever be restored." In the same letter he says of Coleridge: "He and my beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding, as it were *pari passu*, along the path of sickness—I will not say towards the grave, but I trust towards a blessed immortality. It was not my intention to write so seriously; my heart is full, and you must excuse it. . . . A fortnight ago I came hither to my son and daughter, who are living a gentle, happy, quiet, and useful life together. My daughter Dora is also with us. . . . A week ago Mr. W. S. Landor, the poet and author of 'Imaginary Conversations' (which probably have fallen in your way) appeared here. We had never met before, though several letters had passed between us, and as I had not heard that he was in England, my gratification in seeing him was heightened by surprise. We passed a day together at the house of my friend Mr. Rawson, on the banks of Wast-Water. His conversation is lively and original, his learning great, though he will not allow it, and his laugh the heartiest I have heard for a long time."

To Crabb Robinson he wrote on July 21, from Rydal Mount:

"You will grieve to hear that your invalid friend, my dear sister, never quits her room but for a few minutes, and we think is always weakened by the exertion. She is, however, God be praised, in a contented and happy state of mind. . . . Yesterday I was on the top of

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 497.

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Helvellyn with my friend Mr. Julius Hare of Trinity College, Dr. Arnold, Master of Rugby—as keen a reformer as yourself, or any other dissenting Tory. . . . Once I was upon this summit with Sir Humphry Davy and Sir Walter Scott; and many times have I trod it with my nearest and dearest relations and friends, several of whom are gone—and others going—to their last abode. But I have touched upon too melancholy a string. Life is at best but a dream, and in times of political commotion it is too often crowded with ghostly images. God preserve us all!"

The death of Scott, on September 21, deepened, and in part justified, if anything could justify, this gloom. Some compensation for the loss of old friends came with the settlement of Dr. Thomas Arnold and his family at Fox How, less than a mile from Rydal Mount. With them was established a close intimacy, destined to last until the close of Wordsworth's life.

The prospect of living near the Wordsworths was one of the chief inducements that led to the purchase of Fox How, as may be seen from the following letter from Dr. Arnold to J. T. Coleridge from Rugby, April 5, 1832:*

"Our intercourse with the Wordsworths was one of the brightest spots of all; nothing could exceed their friendliness, and my almost daily walks with him were things not to be forgotten. Once, and once only, we had a good fight about the Reform Bill, during a walk up Greenhead Ghyll to see 'the unfinished Sheepfold' recorded in 'Michael.' But I am sure that our political disagreement did not at all interfere with our enjoyment of each other's society; for I think that in the great principles of things we agreed very entirely, and only differed as to the τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. We are thinking of buying or renting a place at Grasmere or Rydal, to spend our holidays at constantly, for not only are the Wordsworths and the scenery a very great attraction, but, etc., etc."

H. W. Pickersgill, the artist, stayed ten days at Rydal Mount this summer, and painted a portrait of Words-

* Stanley's "Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold," I. 280.

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WORDSWORTH IN 1832

From the drawing by Pickersgill, in the Combination Room of St. John's College, Cambridge. Reproduced with the permission of the Master and Fellows of the College.

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worth for St. John's College, Cambridge. Dora wrote on September 27:*

"Ten more pleasant days were never passed. The garret was our studio, our lowly cottage not affording a light sufficiently high for a painter in any other corner. And here we received all our company, whomsoever they might be, Mr. Pickersgill not caring how full the room was. He, too, when you know him, is a most interesting person, so completely wrapped up in his pictures. And you may well imagine how grateful we feel to him for giving us such a picture of such a father. But enough; I am forgetting that everyone cannot care about this said poet quite as much as his daughter does."

On May 30, 1833, Crabb Robinson wrote in his Diary:

"I went with Mrs. Aders to Pickersgill's, to see his portrait of Wordsworth. It is in every respect a fine picture, except that the artist has made the disease in Wordsworth's eyes too apparent. The picture wants an oculist."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 503.

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CHAPTER XXXII

CREEPING SHADOWS

CRABB ROBINSON, within whose range Carlyle and John Stuart Mill had now come, makes relatively few references to Wordsworth in 1831 and 1832. On March 24 of the latter year he wrote:

"Yesterday I had a melancholy letter from Wordsworth. He gives a sad account of his sister, and talks of leaving the country on account of the impending ruin to be apprehended from the Reform Bill!"

In a letter to Wordsworth dated July 13, 1832, he tactfully combines the adulation which unfortunately was required in order to gain a favourable hearing, with some indirect reproof and advice:

"Thinking of old age, and writing to you, I am, by a natural association of ideas, reminded of the great poet lately dead in Germany. As one of his great admirers, I wished but for one quality in addition to his marvellous powers,—that he had as uniformly directed those powers in behalf of the best interests of mankind, as you have done. Deeply interested in your welfare, and fully aware that your continued health and activity of mind are the concern, not only of your private friends and family, but also of the country, and of the literature of our language, I have no other desire than that you may retain your powers as he did his. Goethe began his study of Oriental literature, and wrote his 'West-Eastern Divan,' in his sixty-fourth year! He died in his eighty-third in the full possession, not of his imaginative powers, but of his powers of thought; and he interested himself in all the current literature of Europe to the last. He was very animated in the discussion of some points of natural history the evening before his death, and died with a book in his hand. His last words were an expres-

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sion of his enjoyment of the sunshine and the return of Spring."

A close study of the Pickersgill portrait will show that this kind warning came too late. Wordsworth was already an aged man. Visitors have described his healthy appearance as of one who lived in the open air, his brown skin with its ruddy glow; but his hair was thin and grey, his temples were hollow, his cheeks deeply furrowed, his chin sunken, and the light withdrawn to the depths of his eyes. Resignation rested like a sunset glow upon this face, from which almost every sign of outward-looking and aggressive courage had departed. After a life of little more than sixty years, wholesomely spent, a life successful in one of the highest and most esteemed forms of human endeavour, a life rich in domestic joys and public recognition, a life, moreover, not weakened by a single illness, this is indeed surprising. He himself attributed his rapid and premature decline to anxiety about the fate of his country. In a sense this was its cause. But the reason his anxious cares wore him down, when other men with views no less gloomy than his kept young and vigorous, lay in the passionate intensity of his nature. Goethe had more interests in the world, but was not so interested. Wordsworth's egoism was much less profound and dominating than Goethe's. It was a foible, not a fundamental part of his character. It was rather a form of nervous irritability than real egoism, after all. And it was no shield for his feelings, as egoism of the more superb and formidable kind might have been. Upon whatever object his heart was set, this for the time engaged all his devotion, all his thought, all his strength. His entire life as a poet had been divided between two fields—nature and political speculation. The imaginative quality requisite for the fullest poetical enjoyment of nature and for the communication of this joy to others, seldom outlasts the age of forty. Speculative power, on the other hand, often increases with age for many years beyond that point. In Wordsworth's case the speculative instinct was strong; his love of country and

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humanity was deep. Half of his intellectual life was devoted to politics, and as time passed it became his absorbing interest. But he had chosen a side on which there was little to inspire generous emotions and bold thoughts. His political associates belonged to the past rather than the present. Moreover, they were fighting a losing battle against the liberal tendencies of the age. They played the ungrateful part of stubborn obstructionists and lamenting prophets. It is no wonder if Wordsworth lost the fire of youth when he submitted himself to such a task in such a company.

Out of the innumerable expressions of panic which might be taken from his letters between 1827 and 1832, I shall choose only a few. He imagined that the Roman Catholics, if they obtained political equality, would attempt to overthrow the Church of England and subject the State to Rome. He dreaded any enlargement of the franchise, because he foresaw that it would lead to universal suffrage, in which he discerned only evil. The thought of frequent parliaments afflicted him. The "something German" in his character, which Crabb Robinson perceived, showed itself in his habit of ordering his political judgments by very distant ends and ideals, ascertained through mere speculation. There was something French in this, too, and, let us admit, something human. But it is a habit full of danger; short-sighted practical methods are often the wisest. Not only was he drawn to these fond visions of an England ruled for ever by a benevolent aristocracy, but he was impelled by a dismal fear. "I resided," he wrote to Lord Lonsdale, "fifteen months in France, during the heat of the Revolution, and have some personal experience of the course which these movements must take, if not fearlessly resisted, before the transfer of legislative power takes place."*

On December 11, 1828, he addressed the Rev. Hugh James Rose, in a long letter in two sections, on elementary education.† In so far as it is a plea for natural-

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 317.

† "Memoirs," II. 183; also "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 337.

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ness and against the evils of emulation and excessive reliance upon system, no one will be disposed to object to it. Yet some system of education at public expense for the children of the poor was imperatively required, and Wordsworth, it is evident, would have opposed any plan that might have been suggested. He felt it his duty to "check unreasonable expectations." He preferred to act as a drag upon a movement which was indeed necessitated by the economic and social changes which he deplored, but which he knew could not be stopped. "Can it, in a *general* view," he stupidly asks, "be good that an infant should learn much which its *parents do not know?* Will not the child arrogate a superiority unfavourable to love and obedience?" And he presents an amazing picture, which is scarcely credible: "In a town of Lancashire, about nine of the morning, the streets resound with the crying of infants, wheeled off in carts and other vehicles (some ladies, I believe, lending their carriages for this purpose) to their school-prisons." He seems not to have realized that the alternative to compulsory education was child-labour in the mills, with all its degrading consequences. The fear of what might happen to the Church and to the prosperity of the wealthy classes if the people gained knowledge afflicted him, and he declared that "Mechanics' Institutes make discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptuous workmen."

To the number of those to whom England owes the great advance in religious toleration and political freedom, and especially the precious though limited progress towards lifting the lower half of her population above barbarity and hunger, to the number of writers who aided this great cause, to the names of Charles Reade, Dickens, Kingsley, and Ruskin, we cannot add the name of Wordsworth, or rather of that later Wordsworth who survived his better self.

He was ill prepared for the wave of revolution which swept over Europe in 1830. Owing to the weakness of his eyes, he had been reading very little ("I have not opened a book for nine weeks," he wrote to Crabb

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Robinson about this time), and, his opinions being fixed, it was useless for anyone to present fresh facts to him or argue with him. France he regarded as a country without religion. He deplored her equalitarian tendencies, and denounced her laws of inheritance, which have tended to a general diffusion of wealth instead of allowing it to be concentrated in the hands of a few. He was haunted with visions of what might befall England should the Reform Bill pass. A glimpse of his condition is given in a letter from his daughter, dated October 26, 1831:*

"All are well, father, mother, and aunts, the first-mentioned still prophesying ruin and destruction to this hitherto flourishing spot of earth. The evil which he foresees from this dreadful Reform Bill quite weighs his spirit down. Our tour was a happy event, for it gave fresh impulse to his muse, and he was able to drown his political thoughts and feelings for a time in his poetical ones. We did not see a newspaper for five weeks, and only heard by accident of the bill being kicked out—were we not to be envied?"

We catch another glimpse in Dorothy's letter to Crabb Robinson dated December 1, 1831:

"If it were not for the newspapers, we should know nothing of the turbulence of our great towns and cities. Yet my poor brother is often heart-sick and almost desponding. . . . You will say that my brother looks older. He is certainly thinner, and has lost some of his teeth; but his bodily activity is not at all diminished, and if it were not for public affairs his spirits would be as cheerful as ever."

To the Rev. J. K. Miller, a vicar in Nottinghamshire, he wrote on December 17, 1831,† that his spirits were sinking under a weight of apprehension, and expresses the very comfortable opinion that piety should dispose "men who are anxious for social improvement to wait patiently for God's good time." To Basil Montagu, at about this time, he wrote:‡

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 465.
† *Ibid.*, 476. ‡ *Ibid.*, 479.

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"I forebode the not very distant overthrow of the Institutions under which this country has so long prospered. The Liberals of our neighbourhood tell me that the mind of the nation has outgrown its Institutions; rather say, I reply, that it has shrunk and dwindled from them, as a body of a sick man does from his clothes. The soundest hearts I meet with are, with few exceptions, Americans. They seem to have a truer sense of the benefits of our government than we ourselves have."

To Henry Taylor he wrote:*

"The predominance given in Parliament to the dissenting interest, and to towns which have grown up recently, without a possibility of their being trained in habits of attachment either to the Constitution in Church and State, or what remained of the feudal frame of society in this country, will inevitably bring on a political and social revolution. What may be suffered by the existing generation no man can foresee, but the loss of liberty for a time will be the inevitable consequence. Despotism will be established, and the whole battle will have to be fought over by subsequent generations."

Amid all these whispers of panic he occasionally utters a more dignified sentiment, such as: "Means, in the concerns of this life, are infinitely more important than ends, which are to be valued mainly according to the qualities and virtues requisite for their attainment;" and again: "It has ever been the habit of my mind to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency."

Some of his critical judgments at this time are worth remembering.

"I had once a hope," he wrote to Alexander Dyce,† "to have learned some unknown particulars of Thomson around Jedburgh, but I was disappointed. Had I succeeded, I meant to publish a short life of him prefixed to a volume containing 'The Seasons,' 'The Castle of Indolence,' his minor pieces in rhyme and a few extr cts from his plays, and his 'Liberty'; and I feel still inclined to do

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 495. † *Ibid.*, 359.

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something of the kind. These three writers, Thomson, Collins, and Dyer, had more poetic imagination than any of their contemporaries, unless we reckon Chatterton as of that age. I do not name Pope, for he stands alone, as a man most highly gifted; but unluckily he took the plain, when the heights were within his reach."

He advised a young writer to pay great attention to throwing her thoughts into strict logical form, and acquiring the habit of "looking at things through the steady light of words." "Words," he declared "are not a mere *vehicle*, but they are *powers* either to kill or to animate."*

"I am not a critic," he wrote to another correspondent, "and set little value upon the art. The preface which I wrote long ago to my own Poems I was persuaded to write by the urgent entreaties of a friend, and heartily regret I ever had anything to do with it, though I do not reckon the principles then advanced erroneous."†

In 1831 a volume of "Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth" was compiled by Dr. Joseph Hine, chiefly, as the author himself declared, for the benefit of schools and young persons. This, I believe, was the first of the now vast library of Selections from Wordsworth.

The fourth collective edition of his poems was published by Longman in 1832. In this the five volumes of the edition of 1827 are compressed into four, and there are, as the Advertisement states, "some additional pieces reprinted from miscellaneous publications."

Of the fifty-eight poems assigned by Wordsworth to the years 1828-1832 inclusive, only half a dozen were printed in this edition. Three or four of these, and one or two others, appeared first in a poetical annual called *The Keepsake*. The rest were held back three years longer. Comparing the whole fifty-eight with the forty-five which were written in 1823-1827 inclusive, a reader can hardly fail to note a revival of spirit. There is also a quickening of style. The poet has made for himself

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," II. 400. † *Ibid.*, 439.

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a new manner, very different from, and no doubt inferior to, either of his old manners, the plain and the sublimely suggestive and yet thoroughly characteristic. The poems written in the later group of years vary less among themselves in quality than those of the period just preceding. The level is higher and better maintained. This, I am sure, must be the judgment of every trained reader, provided exception be made for three experiments in romantic narrative, which are probably the least successful of all Wordsworth's compositions; I refer to " The Armenian Lady's Love," " The Russian Fugitive," and " The Egyptian Maid." These sentimental effusions came as a kind of punishment to him for abandoning the path of real experience and observation. He had tried to whip up his failing powers of invention, going so far as to write to his friends for subjects, and nature took an amusing revenge by giving him the manner of Moore and Hunt, or of Byron and Scott at their feeblest.

Apart from these stories in verse, there is much to admire in the list for fine feeling, an original and poetic mode of thought, and severely finished workmanship. The poem on Edith Southey, Dora Wordsworth, and Sara Coleridge, called " The Triad," is difficult reading, but rewards close attention. " The Wishing-Gate " is a deep exercise of heart and mind. The poem entitled " Devotional Incitements " has an austere beauty, like some of Emerson's. One of Wordsworth's great distinctions is that he had many styles. This poem is a pure example of one of them. Another very beautiful poem, in which he excels all but the best of Goldsmith or Gray or Collins, is the " Evening Voluntary," beginning " Calm is the fragrant air, and loth to lose." It gives, through the medium of language, that impression of harmony and completeness within definite limits which landscape-painting sometimes produces, working like soft magic upon the reader. Then there is the noblest of all Wordsworth's sonnets, that " On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford, for Naples." None of the other sonnets written in these five years can com-

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pare with it, nor, indeed, are any of them among Wordsworth's best. In "Yarrow Revisited" he once more fails to catch the charm of "Yarrow Unvisited." The ambitious ode "On the Power of Sound," a marvellous example of technical daring, is too difficult to impart that degree of pleasure without which no poem really achieves its purpose.

Emerson visited Wordsworth August 28, 1833, and found him "a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, who laid down the law on the subject of America, of which he knew little, and talked instead of listening. Lucretius he esteems a far higher poet than Virgil, not in his system, which is nothing, but in his power of illustration." He said he thought Carlyle sometimes insane, and he abused Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister." "He had never gone farther than the first part; so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room." He recited some of his poems. "This recitation was so unlooked for and surprising—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart and reciting to me in a garden-walk, like a schoolboy declaiming—that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet, and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear." Wordsworth surprised Emerson "by the hard limits of his thought." "To judge from a single conversation, he made the impression of a narrow and very English mind." And the visitor, whose natural penetration served him, in this case, instead of knowledge of facts, and served him well, remarks: "It is not very rare to find persons, loving sympathy and ease, who expiate their departure from the common, in one direction, by their conformity in every other."

In the period of five years 1833-1837, Wordsworth suffered many personal losses, which he endured far more bravely than he had borne the mere thought of revolution. The death of Scott, in 1832, was followed, on July 25, 1834, by that of Coleridge. Little as the friends had seen of one another for the last twenty years, their

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spiritual union was of such a nature that only death could dissolve it. Wordsworth, as he wrote to Coleridge's son-in-law,* dared not yield to the solemn thoughts and remembrances that pressed upon him. Let us hope that in Dorothy's nervous state the very weakness of her faculties protected her from too keen a realization of what had happened. They three, Coleridge, William, and Dorothy, had been a triad indeed! Once mutually responsive and dependent, they had already felt a thousand times a deathlike loneliness since their unhappy separation.

Charles Lamb died December 27 in the same year, and Sara Hutchinson June 25, 1835. Both were links with the glorious time of hope and freedom. Both were intimately associated with the memory of Coleridge. To Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth was indebted for faithful service as an amanuensis. She appears to have had a happy and romantic disposition. The sonnet which he dedicated to her memory gives no idea of her usefulness. It is doubtful whether he ever truly appreciated Lamb's humour or relished his honest criticism. Lamb began by speaking his mind to Wordsworth; then, seeing that this would not do, he assumed a serious and deferential tone, partly through genuine respect, but partly to avoid giving offence. It was suggested that Wordsworth should write his epitaph; but many strenuous attempts to achieve the necessary brevity and comprehensiveness failing, the lines were allowed to accumulate until there was produced the elegy "Written after the Death of Charles Lamb." In this are mentioned Lamb's drudgery as a clerk, his hard-earned independence, his love of the city, his charity, and his devotion to his sister, but one does not find here the Muses' joyous son or the learned scholar. One is glad that Wordsworth recognized the urgency of the occasion, but he failed to rise to its height. His personal feelings about Coleridge he resolutely kept hidden in his heart. Some years later an ungracious note to the poem on Lamb was dictated to Miss Fenwick, in which it was

* The original of this letter is on exhibition at the British Museum.

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remarked that some of Lamb's friends were "strange characters, whom his philanthropic peculiarities induced him to countenance," and these friendships were termed "the indulgences of social humours and fancies which were often injurious to himself and causes of severe regret to his friends, without really benefiting the object of his misapplied kindness." This is of a piece with the statement, in the Fenwick note to the poem on James Hogg's death, that the Ettrick Shepherd "was undoubtedly a man of original genius, but of coarse manners and *low and offensive opinions*." It need scarcely be said that these expressions in both cases probably refer to violations of *caste*, and not even of minor morals.

It is a singular and pathetic circumstance that one of Lamb's last letters to Wordsworth ends with "prayers for dear Dorothy," and the very last one says: "Poor Mary is ill again, after a short lucid interval of four or five months. In short, I may call her half dead to me."

There is a tribute to Dorothy Wordsworth, from one who knew her very intimately, in a letter from Mrs. Clarkson to Crabb Robinson, dated October 23, 1833: "Before I left home I had been reading over heaps of old letters. Dear Dorothy Wordsworth's contain the history of the family and of her exertions. What a heart and what a head they discover! What puffs we hear of women, and even of men, who have made books and done charities, and all that, but whose doings and thinkings and feelings are not to be compared with hers!"*

These were fatal years—Scott, Lamb, Sara Hutchinson, Coleridge, dead, and Dorothy Wordsworth reduced to childishness! Wordsworth between sixty and sixty-five suddenly became a lonely figure. His old friends James Losh and Fleming died in 1834, and were followed by genial Robert Jones, Felicia Hemans, and the Ettrick Shepherd, in 1835. In a little poem, composed that year, he commemorates Hogg, Scott, Coleridge, Lamb, Crabbe, and Mrs. Hemans, in lines of very variable quality, six of them and the best being dedicated to Coleridge.

* Original at Dr. William's Library.

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An American visitor, the Rev. Orville Dewey, in a gossiping book, "The Old World and the New," tells of a conversation he had with Wordsworth in 1833. Mr. Dewey managed to interject more remarks of his own than other callers ventured to do, and this is the more noticeable as he differed diametrically from the poet in his estimate of democratic government. "I was so much disappointed," he says, "in the appearance of Wordsworth, that I actually began to suspect that I had come to the cottage of one of the neighbours." As long as the talk was about commonplace subjects, this doubt remained, but when politics were mentioned, the flood of words which was poured forth "for an hour or two" convinced him that he was in the presence of the poet, whose prejudices were known to him beforehand. "He remarked afterwards," Dewey continues, "that, although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had given twelve hours' thought to the condition and prospects of society for one to poetry."

Dorothy's distressing condition lay heavily upon him. At the best she was able to sit or be wheeled in the garden or take short drives, and for many weeks together she was confined to her chamber and even to her bed. At times she was painfully agitated and again had long intervals of quiet, in which she derived comfort from her flowers and the beautiful view from her window. A robin delighted her with its company, and used to perch and sing on a picture-nail in her room. Her memory was good, and she could recite many of her brother's short pieces and passages from other poets. But her sensibilities, even on the days when she felt strongest, were so delicate that the smell of flowers made her weep aloud like a child, and the sight of the shady lawn caused her to laugh with excitement. "In tenderness of heart," wrote her brother, "I do not honestly believe she was ever exceeded by any of God's creatures. Her loving-kindness has no bounds. God bless her for ever and ever."*

* To Charles Lamb, May 17, 1833: "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 10.

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Her room is kept as it was when she occupied it, by the present inhabitants of Rydal Mount, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher Wordsworth. Portraits of Coleridge and his son Hartley hang in the hall just outside.

The poet's own health, though outwardly robust, showed the effects of a lifetime of severe intellectual labour. The act of composition almost invariably brought on an inflammation of his eyes. For weeks at a time he could not read. His sister was greatly concerned that he should apply himself to finishing "The Recluse." She referred to this desire in some of her latest letters. But he lacked the courage to undertake any great task. Mrs. Wordsworth and Dora dropped a hint now and then, in their letters, that his symptoms were partly imaginary.

The love of travel, still strong in him, was indulged partly from the hope of finding new matter for poetical composition and was encouraged by his family, because travel refreshed him in mind and body. In the spring of 1833 he and Mrs. Wordsworth visited their son John at Moresby Rectory, where they enjoyed the liveliness of their little granddaughter. For this living the young clergyman was indebted to the patronage of the Earl of Lonsdale. In the autumn the father and son, with Crabb Robinson, visited the Isle of Man, Staffa, Iona, and Burns's country, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire. Immediately afterwards the poet, being summoned to Carlisle on business, visited, with Mrs. Wordsworth, some of the places on the north-eastern side of the Lake country—Lowther Castle, and the banks of the Eden, and Ullswater. From these two excursions he drew inspiration for twenty-two sonnets. In March, 1835, Wordsworth and his wife were in London, where the poet sat to Pickersgill for a small portrait as a gift to his daughter. They were at the Lodge, Trinity College, Cambridge, on April 15. In London they dined with the poet Rogers. From the middle of August until late in November, Wordsworth was on the wing again, staying for some time at Brinsop Court, in Herefordshire, with Thomas Hutchinson. At

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the beginning of this year, 1835, he published a volume entitled "Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems." It contained, besides many miscellaneous pieces, the "Poems composed during a Tour in Scotland, and on the English Border, in the Autumn of 1831," "Evening Voluntaries," and "Sonnets composed or suggested during a tour in Scotland in the Summer of 1833." It was published by Longman and dedicated to Samuel Rogers. Appended to the volume was a long Postscript in prose, in which the author discussed the Poor Laws, the condition of workmen in factories, and the question of Church disestablishment, all from the conservative point of view.

From a letter of Henry Taylor, dated London, March 20, 1835, it appears that Wordsworth was at that time his guest.*

"This old philosopher," writes Taylor, "is one of the most extraordinary human phenomena that one could have in the house. He has the simplicity and helplessness of a child in regard to the little transactions of life. . . . Everything that comes into his mind comes out—weakness or strength, affections or vanities. . . . He is very happy with us, and very social with everybody, and we have a variety of people to meet him every day at breakfast and dinner."

His next long flight was to London, in May, 1836. With Landor and Crabb Robinson he attended the first performance of Talfourd's "Ion" at Covent Garden Theatre, Ellen Tree and Macready being in the cast. Henry Taylor gave two breakfasts in his honour, at one of which he was brilliant; even Carlyle, who was present, was little else than an auditor.†

The fifth collective edition of his poems began to appear in 1836, two volumes coming out that year and the remaining four in 1837. He and his household were engaged for eight months in the close work of testing new readings and correcting proof-sheets. All through the winter he was in correspondence with Crabb Robinson on the subject of a foreign tour. As

* "Correspondence of Henry Taylor," I. 63. † *Ibid.*, 72.

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usual, Wordsworth's prudence caused him to throw out all sorts of objections: he was too old to travel in a diligence or by night; he would have to live more expensively than Robinson might care to do, etc. But with Robinson tactfully smoothing the way and the ladies at Rydal Mount gently pushing, the project was at last set on foot. And then what a change! The fire of youth returns. We see before us the boy who marched from the Channel to the Alps nearly half a century before. He is "eager to depart, in order to have the benefit of the spring of Italy and its beauty as early as possible." It is delightful to read, in his letter to Robinson, of March 2, 1837: "Mrs. Wordsworth confides in our united prudence, and for myself I have not a jot more fear or apprehension than I should have at home of being carried off by influenza, apoplexy, palsy, or any other of death's ministers."

Edward Moxon, the young publisher, accompanied the two adventurers in the first stages of their journey. They passed from London to Calais on March 19, taking their own carriage. On their way from Paris to Italy, they went through Lyons, Avignon, Nîmes, Vaucluse, Marseilles, Toulon, and Savona. They entered Rome on April 26. Having fallen into good hands, the Bunsens, Severn, Dr. Carlyle, and Miss Mackenzie, they were led to visit not only the great sights of Rome itself, but the Campagna and the hill towns. On their way north, they stopped at Assisi, Arezzo, Laverna, the monastery of Camaldoli, Florence, Bologna, Milan, Como—where they met the Ticknors—Bergamo, Lago di Garda, Verona, and Venice, whence they crossed into the Tyrol. On June 30, at Sillian, Robinson tells us, the poet attempted composition for the first time and dictated twenty lines of "The Cuckoo of Laverna." They spent July in Austria and southern Germany. When Robinson got among Germans, with whom he liked to talk in their own language, he spent his evenings at cafés, leaving the poet to mope by himself. As Wordsworth could neither read by candle-light nor enjoy the conversation of strangers and throw himself into

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the life of foreign cities, it was with some relief, though none the less with gratitude to his kind and bustling companion, that he reached England on August 7. During the trip he frequently lamented that it had come too late in his life to be an effective stimulus to composition.

After a fortnight or so in London the poet went to Brinsop Court for September. Before going home he also spent a few days with Rogers at Broadstairs, and with Dr. William Howley, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Addington Park. With the latter he took some long walks, in which they discussed the dangers which threatened the Established Church.

Robinson had spent the Christmas season at Rydal in 1835, having rooms in a cottage at the foot of the hill, beside the highroad, where he breakfasted, supped, and spent his mornings with books and his Diary. At one o'clock he dined with the Wordsworths, remaining at the Mount the rest of the afternoon or walking with members of the family. Dorothy Wordsworth greatly enjoyed his society and his letters. With Dora he had a make-believe quarrel, which went on merrily for years. Mrs. Wordsworth was grateful to him because his buoyant spirits cheered her husband. It must indeed have been salutary to the stiff conservative poet to have with him a man who combined radical views in politics and religion with a happy disposition, strong common sense, a legal attitude, and deep religious interest. Accordingly, since Robinson, on his part, felt honoured by association with one whom, next to Goethe, he revered most of all the great men he had known, a winter visit to Rydal Mount became a regular feature of his calendar. The Arnolds had come to their new house, Fox How, in 1834, and added a delightful vigour and stir to life in the neighbourhood. Dr. Arnold's theological views were not so acceptable to Wordsworth as to his guest, but his genial, wholesome manner proved irresistible, and a lasting intimacy sprang up between the two families.

As might have been expected, the successes of

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Liberalism did not weaken Wordsworth's political zeal or change his opinions. His forebodings were as dismal as ever. There are probably few men living now who would seriously dispute J. R. Green's statement that "no Ministry has ever wrought greater or more beneficial changes than the Whig Ministry under Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne during its ten years of rule from 1831 to 1841;" yet Wordsworth, even though no catastrophe had yet followed the passage of the Reform Bill, could write thus in November, 1833:*

"My opinion is that the people are bent upon the destruction of their ancient Institutions; and that nothing since, I will not say the passing, but since the broaching of the Reform Bill could or can prevent it. I would bend my endeavours to strengthen to the utmost the rational portion of the Tory party, but from no other hope than this, that the march towards destruction may be less rapid by their interposing something of a check; and the destruction of the monarchy thereby attended with less injury to social order. They are more blind than bats or moles, who cannot see that it is a change or rather an overthrow of social order, as dependent upon the present distribution of property, which is the object of the Radicals."

After a little more in this vein, Mrs. Wordsworth, who held the pen, interjected: "And I, M. W., will not write another word on this subject!" He opposed, tooth and nail, the admission of dissenters to Cambridge University. The only reform he countenanced, except the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, was the movement in favour of international copyright. For this he really toiled, writing or dictating as many as forty letters in two or three days, in support of Serjeant Talfourd's bill. He also interested himself in efforts to build a church at Cockermouth, his native town.

He is said to have talked with much eloquence on the principles of poetry. Few written expressions on this subject have, however, come down to us from the years we are now considering. He insists, in his letters, that poetry is more of an *Art* than the world is disposed to

* Letter to Crabb Robinson, November 15, 1833.

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admit, pointing out how scrupulous Milton, for example, was in his workmanship. He several times expresses regret at having written his own critical Prefaces and Supplementary Essay, and blames himself for complying with Coleridge's wishes in this particular. Being a man *integer vitæ* at every period of his life, he was honest in this, for the three things, democratic views of society, universalism in critical theory, and simplicity in poetical composition, belonged together. Having given up the first, he was bound to give up the others. With reactionary politics, he had returned to a more restricted view of the scope, purpose, and method of poetry, and in practice conformed to his theory. He cannot have realized the extent of the change, for in a letter to Robinson, in 1835, he quoted with satisfaction a writer in *The Examiner*, who praised him because in his treatment of the intellectual instincts, affections, and passions of mankind, he was "nobly distinguished by having drawn out into notice the points in which they resemble each other, in preference to dwelling (as dramatic authors must do) upon those in which they differ," adding, very truly: "If my writings are to last, it will, I myself believe, be mainly owing to this characteristic."

Since Dorothy Wordsworth's mind had been reduced to a state of childishness, and she could derive no satisfaction from seeing her Scottish Tour in print, it was decided not to publish it. The labour of preparing and seeing through the press the fifth collective edition of his poems had been very wearing to Wordsworth and his patient helpers. He wrote to his wife from Salzburg, on July 5, 1837,* a humble and contrite apology for inconsiderate conduct while under that strain:

"Absence in a foreign country, and at a great distance, is a condition for many minds, at least for mine, often pregnant with remorse. Dearest Mary, when I have felt how harshly I often demean myself to you, my inestimable fellow-labourer, while correcting the last edition of my poems, I often pray to God that he would grant us both life, that I may make some amends to you

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 136.

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for that, and all my unworthiness. But you know into what an irritable state this overstrained labour often put my nerves. My impatience was ungovernable, as I *then* thought, but I now feel that it ought to have been governed. You have forgiven me, I know, as you did then; and perhaps that somehow troubles me the more. I say nothing of this to you, dear Dora, though you also have had some reason to complain."

In 1836 appeared "The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth," a new edition, in six volumes, published by Moxon. The contents of "Yarrow Revisited," etc., were included, being distributed in their proper places. The first volume contains a portrait of the author, engraved by Watt after Pickersgill.

Wordsworth, like many other English authors, had reason to complain because his works were "pirated" in America and at Paris. With his consent, at least, though whether to his profit I do not know, there appeared at last, in Philadelphia, in 1836 (or 1837), an American edition of the Complete Works. It was edited by Professor Henry Reed, with whom Wordsworth, for the rest of his life, maintained a pleasant correspondence. It was published before the 1836-37 English edition.

The sale of Wordsworth's works was steadily increasing, and his name was becoming widely known, though such vogue as he had was based in large part on esteem for his piety and political views, and the readers who appreciated his poetical quality were still not many, though choice. There is reason to doubt the statement of John Dix,* that at the first performance of Talfourd's "Ion," he was recognized and loudly cheered as soon as he entered the house. Crabb Robinson would have been sure to note such an occurrence. In 1833 Wordsworth complained that not a single copy of his books had been sold by one of the leading booksellers in Cumberland, his native county. In February, 1835, Thomas Moore mentioned in his Journal that Wordsworth told him he had received about one thousand pounds in all for his works. Moore, as a really fashion-

* "Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Painters, and Politicians."

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able poet, was able to add lightly: " I daresay I must have made by my writings at least twenty times that sum; but then, I have written twenty times as much, such as it is." On the same occasion, a dinner-party at Rogers's in London, Wordsworth artlessly told Moore some amusing things about himself. Moore writes:

" In giving me an account of the sort of society he has in his neighbourhood in the country, and saying that he rarely went out to dinner, he gave a very intelligible picture of the sort of thing it must be, when he *does* go out. ' The Conversation,' he said, ' may be called *catechetical;* for, as they do me the honour to wish to know my opinions on the different subjects, they ask me questions, and I am induced to answer them at great length, till I become quite tired.' And so he does, I'll warrant him; nor is it possible, indeed, to edge in a word, at least in a *tête-à-tête*, till he *does* get tired. I was, however, very well pleased to be a listener."

A more sympathetic and probably more accurate picture of the poet at home, in 1836, is to be found in some private memoranda of Justice Coleridge, contributed by him to Bishop Wordsworth's " Memoirs." He spent six weeks at Fox How in 1836, and during this time saw much of his uncle's friend.

" A walk with him in that country," he wrote, " was a real treat. I never met with a man who seemed to know a country and the people so well, or to love them better, nor one who had such exquisite taste for rural scenery; he had evidently cultivated it with great care; he not only admired the beauties, but he could tell you what were the peculiar features in each scene, or what the incidents to which it owed its peculiar charm. He combined, beyond any man with whom I ever met, the unsophisticated poetic delight in the beauties of nature with a somewhat artistic skill in developing the sources and conditions of them. In examining the parts of a landscape he would be minute; and he dealt with shrubs, flower-beds, and lawns with the readiness of a practised landscape-gardener. . . . He did not intrude his poetry or himself, but he did not decline to talk about either; and he spoke of both simply, unboastingly, and yet with a manly consciousness of their worth. It was clear he

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thought he had achieved a high place among poets; it had been the aim of his life, humanly speaking; and he had taken worthy pains to accomplish and prepare himself for the enterprise. He never would sacrifice anything he thought right on reflection, merely to secure present popularity, or avert criticism which he thought unfounded; but he was a severe critic on himself, and would not leave a line or an expression with which he was dissatisfied until he had brought it to what he liked. He thought this due to the gift of poetry and the character of the poet. . . . There is much simplicity in his character, much *naïveté*, but it is all generous and highly moral."

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CHAPTER XXXIII

LATE ACTIVITIES

At this point it may be well to note some of Wordsworth's matured literary judgments. Milton, as is evident from dozens of remarks and from his frequent imitation, was the object of his deepest reverence. He less frequently mentioned Shakespeare, but hotly resented an intimation that he did not know and admire his works " this side idolatry." Chaucer, Spenser, and many of the Elizabethan dramatists, were, in the old Dove Cottage days, his constant delight. Daniel and Drayton he held in peculiar honour. He said he knew by heart many thousand lines of Dryden and Pope, though he thought the future progress of English poetry required the abandonment of their ideals of poetic diction and an advance upon their versification. We have seen how intensely interested he was in the works of even the minor eighteenth-century poets and poetesses. Of Burns he appreciated and enjoyed everything except his satirical vein—a large exception, to be sure, but one based wholly on religious, and not at all on æsthetic grounds. He honoured his greatest English contemporaries by judging them as if they had died centuries ago, and therefore judged them severely. He was also affected by his impressions of their personal characters, but not so much as has been supposed, for some of the sternest judgments he ever uttered were upon the poems of Scott, whom he respected. It would have been outside of his nature and quite inexplicable if he had liked Byron's poetry. He detested it and despised the man. That he did not say more about the poetry of Shelley and Keats is probably due to the fact

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that the avowedly antichristian opinions and irregular life of the former made him unwilling to let himself go, either in enjoyment or in comment; while he no doubt inferred from the preponderance of the sensuous quality in Keats's verse that its effect would be evil, and that its author was less intellectual or less moral than a poet ought to be. It is uncharitable, if not ridiculous, to suppose that he was jealous of these rivals. In regard to the minor poets of his day, he was generous and painstaking, paying close attention to their works, encouraging and severely criticizing them when occasion offered, and showing a tendency to estimate their chances of immortality rather too highly. It is interesting to observe that many of the persons nearest and dearest to him were incited by his example to write verse—his sister, his wife, his son John (who sent him from Madeira, in 1844, a long Latin poem, "Epistola ad Patrem suum"), Quillinan, Sara Hutchinson, and at least one of her brothers.

We are indebted to Crabb Robinson for some of Wordsworth's critical remarks in 1836. On January 7 he wrote in his Diary:

"On our walk [along Windermere] Wordsworth was remarkably eloquent and felicitous in his praise of Milton. He spoke of the Paradise Regained as surpassing even the Paradise Lost in perfection of execution, though the theme is far below it, and demanding less power. He spoke of the description of the storm in it as the finest in all poetry; and he pointed out some of the artifices of versification by which Milton produces so great an effect—as in passages like this:

> Pining atrophy,
> Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
> Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums,

in which the power of the final *rheums* is heightened by the *atrophy* and *pestilence*. Wordsworth also praised, but not equally, Samson Agonistes. He concurred, he said, with Johnson in this, that it had *no middle*, but the beginning and end are equally sublime."

On January 29 Robinson recorded a conversation which shows that in regard to a contemporary poet,

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and one against whom he might have been expected to feel an antipathy based on the immense divergence of their political views, Wordsworth was not only just, but boldly generous:

"Wordsworth speaks highly of the author of Corn Law Rhymes. He says: 'None of us have done better than he has in his best, though there is a deal of stuff arising from his hatred of existing things. Like Byron, Shelley, etc., he looks on much with an evil eye.' Wordsworth likes his later writings the best, and mentioned the Ranter as containing some fine passages. Elliott has a fine eye for nature. He is an extraordinary man."

And two days later the diarist, who was making the most of his opportunities at Rydal, says:

"It occurs to me that I have not noticed as I ought Wordsworth's answer to the charge that he never quotes other poems than his own. In fact, I can testify to the incorrectness of the statement. But he himself remarked, 'You know how I love and quote not only Shakespeare and Milton, but Cowper, Burns, etc.; as to some of the later poets, I do not quote them because I do not love them. Even as works of mere taste there is this material circumstance—they came too late. My taste was formed, for I was forty-five when they appeared, and we cannot after that age love new things. Had I been young, I should have enjoyed much of them, I do not doubt."

Physical endowments and limitations must of necessity have much to do with the direction and scope of a poet's efforts. Wordsworth's eye was immeasurably superior to his ear, and he had no sense of smell. Milton was a musician, and a careful examination of his works shows that he was more affected by sounds than by sights; his report of things seen is often vague, whereas of words and melodies he gives most precise accounts; perhaps excessive study in boyhood impaired his sight long before he subjected himself to the task of killing Salmasius at the expense of his own eyes. Wordsworth and the members of his household rarely mentioned music in their correspondence. On his visits to London

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he appears rarely if ever to have gone to concerts. I can think of no musicians among his friends. There are comparatively few references to the art of music in his poems. The technical terms of it, which Shakespeare loved to repeat as if they were hung round with delicious memories, and which Milton used so exactly and withal so familiarly, hardly ever occur in Wordsworth. But what with his own gift and the priceless help of his sister, he *saw* things more closely and more comprehensively, in their relations with one another, than Milton or Shakespeare, and, indeed, has no equal as the poet of the eye. That he, nevertheless, had a fine ear is not to be denied. Of English poets down to his own time, it is doubtful whether more than four or five excel him in brilliancy of musical effect at their, and his, best, or if any except Shakespeare and Milton equal him in musical variety. Spenser in places is sweeter than Wordsworth ever is; Coleridge has some unmatched passages of harmony; Keats is more constantly and fully melodious; but none of these have at command Wordsworth's *range* of sound. Yet he was not so quick and sure in hearing as in seeing. The laborious corrections to which he submitted his works before republication were concerned largely with improper effects of sound previously unnoticed. Dowden, in the Introduction to his volume of "Selections," has made a collection of instances. I believe most readers of English poetry will agree that, next to Shakespeare, Wordsworth has filled our minds with the greatest number of distinct images, while Milton, perhaps, or Keats, has more fed the ear with "concourse of sweet sound."

In the period of five years from 1833 to 1837, Wordsworth's powers of composition were exerted fitfully. The mind of a great thinker and the hand of a cunning artist were still his. What had changed was the impulse and the method. Nothing shows more plainly than this change that personality is determined less by the degree of a man's intelligence than by the nature of his desires. Wordsworth's mind by this time, and thenceforth, was fixed upon two supreme objects—one earthly,

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the other heavenly. The former object was the maintenance substantially *in statu quo* of the English Church and State. The other was life after death, in union with Christ. These two desires were the mainspring of every fresh welling up of poetry within him, and every deepening of old currents, throughout the last twenty years of his life. We may have felt impatient with him for too soon resigning himself to the idea that he was old. Had he been able to foresee that he should live to be an octogenarian, perhaps his middle years would have been full of hope and joy. At last he was really an old man, in fact as well as in feeling, and it must be admitted that he bore his years with dignity, and used to splendid advantage the great powers which were still his. But when it is said of Wordsworth that he was thus or thus, or believed in this or that, it is always necessary to ask, Which Wordsworth—he of the sunny slope, or he of the shadow?

His poetical method, his tone, his style, changed as completely as his personality. "A Wren's Nest," 1833, for example, would scarcely suggest that it was by the author of "The Sparrow's Nest," 1801.

There is much profit and delight to be had in reading these poems of Wordsworth's genuine old age. They contain no single word which is not the result of studious care. In many cases the workmanship is extremely fine and close. Occasionally, when the subject warms him, he throws back upon it a mild radiance like the tempered light of a wintry sun. With manifest sincerity he finds a way of expressing in season and out of season his rather narrow and colourless piety. At all costs he will do this; it is now a main purpose of his life. We can only wish the religion of his old age had been more generous and comprehensive, more like that of his youth. A fine example of his later manner is the grave and pensive poem, beginning, "The sun is couched, the sea-fowl gone to rest."

His tour with his son John and Henry Crabb Robinson, in the Isle of Man and in Scotland, in the autumn of 1833, took him out of himself to some extent, and

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encouraged him to direct his thoughts upon external nature. But the time has passed when he could submit unreservedly to her influence. He must now use her as an object of meditation, or as a servant of abstract thought. He stands detached from her, no longer ranging freely with her, hand in hand. She is alienated, even suspect. His heart is fixed upon another country and other loves. It is very sad and discouraging to see a great poet turning away as if in reprobation from a pure love that never played him false. Of the forty-eight pieces composed or suggested during the tour, one, the sonnet " In Sight of the Town of Cockermouth," is deservedly very famous, and somewhat reconciles us to the ever-recurrent topic of the grave. In the " Stanzas suggested in a Steam-boat off Saint Bees' Heads, on the Coast of Cumberland," and the sonnets " In the Channel, between the Coast of Cumberland and the Isle of Man," and " At Sea off the Isle of Man," he utters a futile and melancholy protest against progress, reason, and science, on the assumption that these forces are at enmity with imagination's finer ministry. This becomes a persistent note in his poetry. On lips less restrained than his it rose to an unmeaning shriek. Wordsworth's notion of the simple and the meek,

> Blest in their pious ignorance, though weak
> To cope with Sages undevoutly free,

shows that he had fallen into a new kind of panic. Moreover, when he repeatedly exalts mediæval Christianity and refers to the Reformation with a slight shudder, and when he even apologizes for the " bold credulities " of the past, we realize that the same repulsion which produced the Oxford Movement was at work in him. The earlier note, of political Toryism, corresponding to this new note of religious reaction, is struck more violently than ever in the sonnet entitled " Lowther ":

> Hourly the democratic torrent swells;
> For airy promises and hopes suborned
> The strength of backward-looking thoughts is scorned.
> Fall if ye must, ye Towers and Pinnacles,
> With what ye symbolize; authentic Story
> Will say, Ye disappeared with England's Glory !

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Of the ten poems assigned to 1834, one is remarkable because of its complete unlikeness to anything else in the whole immense range of Wordsworth's varieties of style. This is the "Lines suggested by a Portrait from the Pencil of F. Stone." In several respects it anticipates the practice of Robert Browning. It is dramatic, as if spoken with gestures and other motions, which are plainly indicated by grammatical devices, such as the use of demonstrative pronouns and the imperative mood; small picturesque details are brusquely catalogued; the versification is very free, with abrupt stops and bold *enjambements*, like that of the late Elizabethan writers; the physical description, made with the gusto of a connoisseur, is both minute and striking, and this leads to many a quaint psychological remark. The last fourteen lines might have been omitted with advantage, both to the poem itself and to the force of this comparison with Browning.

Nearly all the poems assigned to 1835 were called forth by the deaths or misfortunes of the poet's friends, the most noteworthy being the lines to Charles Lamb and those to the Ettrick Shepherd, already mentioned. He appears to have composed no verse, or very little, in 1836. In the following year his visit to Italy stirred him to considerable productiveness. Of the twenty-eight poems directly connected with the tour, the most valuable are certainly the "Musings near Aquapendente" and the six sonnets on Italian liberty with which the series closes. One sentence in the "Musings" came from a deep place in Wordsworth's experience. He had been realizing that his gift of poetic vision and of song was dwindling from disuse, and in self-reproach he said:

> Who would keep
> Power must resolve to cleave to it through life,
> Else it deserts him, surely as he lives.

In this piece the note of despondency is heard again; the times are said to be "vexed and disordered," science is reproached, and a plea is made for mystical faith. Most of what was distinctive in the writings of Newman or most impressive in the works of Carlyle was already

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to be found in the last hundred lines of Wordsworth's poem. That he was aware of the effect they might produce, as being favourable to the Oxford Movement, and desired rather than deprecated that effect, is seen in the note composed by him conjointly with Frederick W. Faber. And in the Fenwick note he says of the Tractarian leaders: "Much of the work they are undertaking was grievously wanted, and may God grant their endeavours may continue to prosper as they have done."

Before he reached his sixty-eighth year, Wordsworth had won as much renown as it is possible for a lofty thinker and sincere artist to obtain from his own generation. Reprints and fresh editions of his works followed one another rapidly. He was widely read in Britain and America. His influence extended through all ranks of society. Many of his poems were recognized as English classics. The number of his lines which had already become familiar quotations is astonishingly large. The principles of his art were still a matter of lively controversy, and he was acclaimed by men of quite opposite views as the champion of causes to which they were attached. In general, however, the tendency of his more recent work, and the well-known character of his later opinions, made it impossible for the public to understand the meaning and purpose of his earlier poems. It was taken for granted that the same man had written "Lyrical Ballads" and "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." "The Prelude" was still unprinted. The existence of such a document as the Letter to Bishop Watson was not even suspected. Only a small and dwindling band of intimate friends could possibly interpret aright the works of his prime. If his declaration of liberal principles and "The Prelude" as originally written had been printed in 1810, the later part of his career would have been much modified, consciously and unconsciously, to conform with his early course. We should have seen, not debilitating efforts to assert himself against the best thought of his time, but invigorating conflicts with the common foe of all original minds. His fame would have come from a different quarter, and sooner.

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He continued through these years to interest himself actively on behalf of international copyright, being justly indignant at the unfairness of the laxity in America, where English writers were not protected, although American authors could secure their property in England. He also laboured for an extension of the time during which the works of an English author should be treated as the exclusive property of his heirs. He wrote to Gladstone on March 23, 1838:* "It may not be superfluous to say that within the last three years or so my poetical writings have produced for me nearly £1,500, and that much the greatest part of them either would be public property to-morrow, if I should die, or would become so in a very few years." He had an extensive correspondence with Gladstone and Peel on this subject. To the latter he wrote about this time:† "I have gained much more from my long-published writings within the last five or six years than in the thirty preceding, and the copyright of much the greatest portion of them would die with me, or within the space of four years."

In June and July, 1838, he travelled and made visits in the counties of Durham and Northumberland. He declined a proposal made to him by a committee in the University of Glasgow to become a candidate for the Lord Rectorship, but went to Durham to receive the degree of D.C.L., this being the first time the honour had been received there by anyone in person.

He opposed the use of the secret ballot in elections, as being a concession to cowardice, and giving opportunity to fraud. Two sonnets on this subject were printed in a volume, "The Sonnets of William Wordsworth, collected in one volume," which was published in June, 1838. They were omitted from all subsequent editions prepared by himself.

Through Crabb Robinson's Reminiscences we are introduced to a lady whose friendship meant much to Wordsworth in his declining years. He says:

"My winter visit to the Wordsworths commenced on the 28th of December [1838]. One agreeable circum-

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 159. † *Ibid.*, p. 164.

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stance which marked it was my becoming acquainted with Miss Fenwick, an excellent lady. She is of a good family in Cumberland, and devotes her affluence to acts of charity and beneficence. She is warmly attached to the Wordsworths, and esteemed by them as their very dearest friend. Her character is essentially religious and liberal. She occupied a house at Ambleside, and Wordsworth, Dr. Arnold, and many others made this house a frequent end of a walk. . . . Wordsworth talks well with her, and she understands him. Harriet Martineau says: 'Wordsworth goes every day to Miss Fenwick, gives her a smacking kiss, and sits down before her fire to open his mind. Think what she could tell if she survives him! His conversation can never be anticipated. Sometimes he is annoying, from the pertinacity with which he dwells on trifles; at other times he flows on in the utmost grandeur, leaving a strong impression of inspiration.'"

Robinson also reports, January 2, 1839, that Dr. Arnold did not like the "Oxford Tract men," while Wordsworth was rather friendly to them. Again, on January 7, he spent with Wordsworth and Dr. Arnold an evening agreeably divided between whist, Gladstone, and Carlyle, whose "French Revolution" Wordsworth did not like. The poet's rigidity of opinion may be seen in the wistful reflection with which the diarist closes his notes for the day: "There are an infinity of relations as well as of modes of viewing things, and all in their place and way may be true. It is a great defect when the mind begins to *ossify*, and to be so confined to certain fixed ideas as not to be able to shift its position and see things from all sides." Robinson's own mind was as nimble and sceptical as Boswell's. It must have been amusing to see him at play with so stiff a dogmatist as Wordsworth. On January 18 Robinson writes:

"I walked out with Wordsworth. We met with Dr. Arnold. We talked of Southey. Wordsworth spoke of him with great feeling and affection. He said, 'It is painful to see how completely dead Southey is become to all but books. He is amiable and obliging, but when he gets away from his books he seems restless, and as if out of his element. I therefore hardly see him for years

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together.' Now all this I had myself observed. Rogers also had noticed it. With Wordsworth it was a subject of sorrow, not of reproach. Dr. Arnold said afterwards, 'What was said of Mr. Southey alarmed me. I could not help saying to myself, Am I in danger of becoming like him? Shall I ever lose my interest in things, and retain an interest in books only?' 'If,' said Wordsworth, 'I must lose my interest in one of them, I would rather give up books than men. Indeed I am by my eyes compelled, in a great measure, to give up reading.'" On January 22, Robinson writes: "Wordsworth seems to have adopted something of Coleridge's tone, but is more concentrated in the objects of his interest. I am glad to find that neither he nor Dr. Arnold can accompany Gladstone in his Anglo-papistical pretensions. Indeed, of the two, the Doctor is the less of a Churchman. I find that he considers the whole claim of apostolical succession as idle."

Robinson's visit came to an end on February 2, 1839. Few of Wordsworth's correspondents, in the latter half of his life at least, ever ventured to address him except in terms of profound respect and very seriously. Robinson learned the softer side of his nature, and while protesting that to such a man he dared not write "mere rattling letters," he did so, nevertheless. He repeated with approval a remark of Rogers, that few men knew how Wordsworth loved his friends. Few, for example, could know how much anxious care and affectionate forbearance Wordsworth exercised towards Hartley Coleridge, how he shielded and encouraged this wayward man of genius.

Miss Isabella Fenwick was a family connection of Sir Henry Taylor, the poet, and it was perhaps through him that she became intimately acquainted with the household at Rydal Mount. Hers was an enthusiastic, loving nature, readily exalted, capable of being deeply depressed, and constantly moved with religious feeling. She had independent means, and was about ten years younger than Mrs. Wordsworth. Aubrey de Vere wrote of her, to Sir Henry Taylor, on the occasion of her death, in 1856,* that "great love, great aspiration, great

* "Correspondence of Henry Taylor," p. 222.

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suffering," were the memories she left behind her. She seems to have had, in full measure, the gift of consolation and encouragement for those whom she loved.

"Happily at this time," writes Sir Henry Taylor in his "Autobiography,"* "she was brought into relations of the closest intimacy with Wordsworth. Her admiration for him as a poet, always supreme, allied itself with affection for him as a man; and her admiration and affection for him was equalled, if not exceeded, by his for her. She took a house within an easy walk of Rydal Mount, and when that house ceased to be at her disposal, she took up her abode for some time at Rydal Mount itself. Mrs. Wordsworth . . . attached herself to Miss Fenwick with a warmth and energy of nature which took no account of years; and it can seldom have happened that a friendship of three persons first formed in advanced life has been so fervent and so inward."

Mentioning her first visit to Rydal Mount ten years before, Miss Fenwick wrote: "I think I said to you then, I would be content to be a servant in the house to hear his wisdom." While not forgetting that both Miss Fenwick and Taylor were almost idolaters of Wordsworth, we may accept these statements of Taylor:

"What Miss Fenwick greatly prized in the family was the openness and sincerity with which all thoughts and feelings were expressed. . . . As the intimacy became closer, her admiration for the personal qualities of the wife became, I think, more unmixed than her admiration for the personal qualities of the husband; but even when she had arrived at the knowledge of all his faults—and no man's were less hidden—she retained a profound sense of what *was* great in his personal character, as well as an undiminished appreciation of his genius and powers. At this time her influence over him was invaluable to the family. His love for his only daughter was passionately jealous, and the marriage which was indispensable to her peace and happiness was intolerable to his feelings. The emotions—I may say the throes and agonies of emotion—he underwent were such as an old man could not have endured without suffering in health, had he not been a very strong old man. But he was

* Vol. I., p. 334.

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like nobody else,—old or young. He would pass the night, or most part of it, in struggles and storms, to the moment of coming down to breakfast; and then, if strangers were present, be as easy and delightful in conversation as if nothing was the matter. But if his own health did not suffer, his daughter's did; and this consequence of his resistance, mainly aided, I believe, by the temperate, but persistent pressure exercised by Miss Fenwick, brought him at length, though far too tardily, to consent to the marriage."

Even in the two or three years before Miss Fenwick's domestication at Rydal Mount, she had arrived at great intimacy with the poet. He used to stride over to her cottage on dark rainy afternoons, to avoid the crowd of company at home—sometimes as many as twenty or thirty visitors in a day—and to pour into her willing ears the contents of his prodigious memory. Thus she heard him read, or rather recite, portions of "The Prelude," which performances his little grandson called "Grandpapa reading without a book." In a letter dated March 28, 1839,* she reveals the extremely important fact that he was giving to that poem a very thorough and regrettable revision:

"Our journey was postponed for a week, that the beloved old poet might accomplish the work that he had in hand, the revising of his grand autobiographical poem, and leaving it in a state fit for publication. At this he has been labouring for the last month, seldom less than six or seven hours in the day, or rather one ought to say the whole day, for it seemed always in his mind—quite a possession; and much, I believe, he has done to it, expanding it in some parts, retrenching it in others, and perfecting it in all. I could not have imagined the labour that he has bestowed on all his works, had I not been so much with him at this time."

Miss Fenwick found nothing in him more remarkable than "the constant and firm persuasion of his own *greatness*," and yet she perceived that he desired sympathy and was sensible to praise. One evening, she relates, "he appeared quite radiant with joy, and I told

* "Correspondence of Henry Taylor," p. 87.

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him I saw that he had been very successful in his morning's work. He said he had indeed, and that he was sure that he had never done better in his life, and then he continued: 'And I must tell you what Mary said when I was dictating to her this morning' (she always writes for him). 'Well, William, I declare you are cleverer than ever,' and the tears started into his eyes, and he added: 'It is not often I have had such praise; she has always been sparing of it.'"

Miss Fenwick does not appear to have contradicted him, but his remark was unfair and untrue, and he would have been a better and no doubt in the long run happier man had he not been pampered with praise by an adoring circle of self-sacrificing women.

We learn from one of Miss Fenwick's letters* that Wordsworth was so disgusted with De Quincey's articles on himself and his family that he forbade the entrance into his house of *Tait's Magazine*, in which they were printed. He had an attack of something like sciatica in the summer of 1838, which so surprised him, after nearly seventy years of immunity from pain, that, as it is easy to gather from her glozing words, he made everybody in the house miserable. She wrote on January 4, 1839: "What strange workings are there in his great mind, and how fearfully strong are all his feelings and affections! If his intellect had been less powerful they must have destroyed him long ago."

On the whole, I am bound to conclude from the letters of this estimable, but overexcitable lady, that the "Fenwick notes," or explanations of his poems dictated to her by Wordsworth in 1843, should not be too unquestioningly depended upon. She was a perfervid and credulous hero-worshipper. She thought herself endowed with finer gifts of appreciation than Crabb Robinson. "The Crabb," she said, "seems to study him, but he can only know him very superficially." Yet she was clear-eyed enough to see and note the tragedy of Wordsworth's old age, his vain endeavour to hold fast to his genius, his forcing himself to write,

* "Correspondence of Henry Taylor," p. 96.

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his inner rage and outward peevishness. She, like the other members of his little court, made matters worse by her notion that he could perform wonders yet, if only he exercised his will.

In June, 1839, Wordsworth served Miss Fenwick in the office of a guide at Cambridge, showing her his old room in St. John's, which she pronounced " one of the meanest and most dismal apartments in the whole University." " But here," he said, " I was as joyous as a lark." He showed how he used to draw his bed to the door that he might see the top of the window in Trinity College chapel. Miss Fenwick remarks that the feelings of Wordsworth and his brother, the Master of Trinity, seemed not to go farther than brotherly regard, respect, and admiration, and that they did not seek each other's society.

A curious parallel to the mental breakdown of Dorothy Wordsworth and the insanity of Mary Lamb and Charles Lloyd is presented by the misfortunes of the Southey family at this time. Mrs. Southey's mind gave way first, and the gloomy forebodings with which Southey regarded the democratic trend of his country spread at last into a general state of depression. Wordsworth, perhaps, took warning. At least it is happily true that for some years his tone became more cheerful.

Although there had been some delay in his joining other authors in their petition in favour of Serjeant Talfourd's copyright bill, Wordsworth made ample compensation by sending to Parliament a special petition of his own in May, 1839.

His appearance at Oxford that summer to receive the degree of D.C.L. was the occasion of an enthusiastic reception. He was presented for the degree by the professor of poetry, the Rev. John Keble, whose address shows that the honour was given to Wordsworth with peculiar emphasis upon his character as a *religious* poet. In a letter to John Peace, of the City Library, Bristol, who had walked to Oxford in order to be present in the Sheldonian Theatre, Wordsworth wrote:*

* " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 184.

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"It was not a little provoking that I had not the pleasure of shaking you by the hand at Oxford when you did me the honour of coming so far to 'join in the shout.' I was told by a fellow of University College that he had never witnessed such an outburst of enthusiasm in that place, except upon the occasions of the visits of the Duke of Wellington—one unexcepted."

Dr. Arnold wrote:*

"I went up to Oxford to the Commemoration for the first time for twenty-one years, to see Wordsworth and Bunsen receive their degrees; and to me, remembering how old Coleridge inoculated a little knot of us with the love of Wordsworth, when his name was in general a byword, it was striking to witness the thunders of applause, repeated over and over again, with which he was greeted in the theatre by undergraduates and Masters of Arts alike."

In October, 1840, Miss Fenwick went to live at Rydal Mount. The hospitality of that house was almost limitless. It is astonishing how many guests, relatives, friends, and friends' children, not to mention passing strangers, were entertained by Mrs. Wordsworth in her quiet, simple way. Her first object was to protect her husband from too great distraction, and visitors sometimes ill-naturedly complained that his wants were considered first. But as he gradually gave up reading and resigned himself to the fact that it was useless to think of completing "The Recluse" or embarking on any other large scheme of composition, he welcomed literary pilgrims more and more cordially. To some of them his talk seemed egotistical, but they little knew the man. He had never been willing to discuss what he did not understand. It had been part of his life's task to study the workings of his own mind as an example of how a poet thought and felt. He never really posed. He certainly never pretended to be other than he was. And although he now knew that he was famous and would be an object of interest to future generations, he was unwilling, as much perhaps through genuine modesty as through principle, to allow anyone else to

* Stanley's "Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold," II. 147.

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study him. His friend Barron Field had written a critical memoir of him, containing a number of notices taken from periodicals. The poet forbade its publication, in a letter which, however disappointing to poor Mr. Field, was neither unkind nor unreasonable. He did not wish to be advertised, and he had a careful regard for his future influence, which he feared might be impaired through a premature estimate of his qualities. The memoir has remained in manuscript.

In July, 1840, the Queen Dowager and her sister called at Rydal, and Wordsworth accompanied them through the park and also through his own grounds. Among his letters this year are five to B. R. Haydon, the painter, which are instructive as showing the endless pains he took to bring his poems to the utmost point of perfection. In a moment of rash enthusiasm he had sent Haydon a freshly-composed sonnet, the one beginning " By art's bold privilege, warrior and war-horse stand." " I now send it," he wrote, " but with an earnest request that it may not be put into circulation for some little time, as it is warm from the brain, and may require, in consequence, some little retouching." Within less than ten days he wrote four more letters and two postscripts to Haydon making alterations in the sonnet.

In November, 1840, he came near losing his life in a collision between his gig and a four-in-hand coach, three miles south of Keswick. But his strong constitution was not injured by the shock, for on January 3, 1841, Dr. Arnold, writing from Fox How, after mentioning Southey's pitiable mental failure, adds: " Wordsworth is in body and mind still sound and vigorous; it is beautiful to see and hear him."*

In April, 1841, he was in London for a short while, and later, with Miss Fenwick, Mrs. Wordsworth, his daughter, and his niece, he visited the south-west of England. They went over the once to him familiar ground of the Wye Valley, and the scenes of many of his early poems, Goodrich Castle, Tintern, and Alfoxden. Poole had died September 8, 1837. Bristol and Bath were in-

* Stanley's " Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold," II. 218.

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cluded in this tour, and in the latter city, on May 11, 1841, Dora Wordsworth and Edward Quillinan were married. In a letter to John Peace, of Bristol, from Rydal Mount, September 4, 1841, Wordsworth gave a brief sketch of the rest of the trip:

"We made a very agreeable tour in Devonshire, going by Exeter to Plymouth, and returning along the coast by Salisbury and Winchester to London. In London and its neighbourhood we stayed not quite a month. During this tour we visited my old haunts, at and about Alfoxden and Nether Stowey, and at Coleorton, where we stayed several days. These were farewell visits for life, and, of course, not a little interesting."

During Wordsworth's stay at Bath he wrote to Crabb Robinson, April 18:

"This day I have attended, along with Mary, Whitcomb Church, where, as I have heard from you, your mother's remains lie. I was there also the day before yesterday, and the place is so beautiful, especially at this season of verdure and blossoms, that it will be my favourite walk while I remain here; and I hope you will join us and take the ramble with me. Some time before Mary and I left home, we inscribed your name upon a batch of Italian memorials, which you must allow me to dedicate to you, when the day of publication shall come."

In August, Wordsworth had a visit from a person who interested him extremely, Charles Valentine Le Grice, an old schoolmate of Coleridge and Lamb at Christ's Hospital, and afterwards an undergraduate with Coleridge at Cambridge. Their talk was about the boyhood of their dead friends, of whom Le Grice told anecdotes new to Wordsworth.

In January, 1842, during his midwinter sojourn at Rydal, Robinson records some of Wordsworth's literary judgments: "He held Pope to be a greater poet than Dryden; but Dryden to have most talent and the strongest understanding." He thought Chatterton, had he lived longer, would have proved one of the greatest poets in our language; "his genius was universal; he

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excelled in every species of composition, so remarkable an instance of precocious talent being quite unexampled; his prose was excellent, and his power of picturesque description and satire great."

After returning to London and reading the "Memorials of a Tour in Italy," dedicated to himself, Robinson wrote in his Diary, April 29: "Breakfast with Sam Rogers, with whom I stayed till twelve. He was as amiable as ever, and spoke with great warmth of Wordsworth's new volume. 'It is all gold. The least precious is all gold.'" Rogers said that Wordsworth, "like all great men," was greatest in conversation. It is permissible to deny the general proposition, and there is an abundance of testimony against the particular instance.

Another visitor to Rydal Mount in 1842 was disappointed at finding Wordsworth not sufficiently literary. John Morley, in his essay on W. R. Greg, says: "The poet was, in external manner and habit, too much of a peasant for Greg's intellectual fastidiousness. He called on one occasion at Rydal Mount, and Wordsworth, who had been re-gravelling his little garden-walks, would talk of nothing but gravel, its various qualities, and their respective virtues."

There are a hundred anecdotes like this, and far too much has been made of them. Wordsworth, in fact, was a man of moods, and also a man of character. He was too honest to pose as a seer when he was feeling as a mere country gentleman; and, on the other hand, he was, in general, too ungracious to make the small sacrifices required for the pleasing entertainment of visitors. Tennyson, as Edward Fitzgerald says ("Letters," p. 468), would not go to see Wordsworth, though near him, in 1842. In this I think he showed fine feeling, if he stayed away through fear of intruding.

A very creditable instance of the way in which Wordsworth constantly based his conduct on principle, even when it was inexpedient to do so, is his refusal to have copies of his new books sent to the Reviews. If they wished to notice them they could buy them. He thought

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that the common practice was an improper attempt to curry favour.

In April, 1842, the volume entitled " Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years, including The Borderers, a Tragedy," was published by Edward Moxon.

The Wordsworths spent part of May and June, 1842, in London. Robinson called on them on May 12, and was careful to record the poet's express statement, emphasizing it afterwards in a note to the original entry, that the lines beginning "She was a phantom of delight" were written about his wife: " Wordsworth said that the poems, ' Our walk was far among the ancient trees,' then, ' She was a phantom of delight,' next, ' Let other bards of angels sing,' and finally the two Sonnets ' To a Painter ' in the new volume (of which Sonnets the first is only of value as leading to the second), should be read in succession, as exhibiting the different phases of his affection to his wife." As we have seen, this declaration has not cleared away all doubts.

Shortly afterwards, as we learn from a letter of Robinson's, dated May 21, 1842, he gave a dinner in honour of his distinguished friend, which was chiefly remarkable because no other great celebrities were present. " The poet made himself very agreeable," Robinson wrote, " talking at his ease with everyone. Indeed, he has been remarkably pleasant during his visit to London; and has dined every day, except when he condescended to wander into the *terra incognita* of Russell Square, with bishops and privy councillors, peers, and archbishops."

News of the death of Dr. Thomas Arnold reached Robinson, and probably Wordsworth also, who was with him, at a fashionable concert at Miss Coutts's, on June 13, 1842.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SAGE OF RYDAL

In melancholy days after his wife's death Thomas Carlyle forced himself to write what he remembered about Wordsworth. The whole narration, in his "Reminiscences," has, of course, an amazing mordant vividness, and when one considers that certain of its details had been borne in memory more than twenty-five years, one feels how intense and dominating Carlyle's genius for portraiture was. The petulant tone may be set down to his disconsolate mood, and readily forgiven. But it is apparent that under no circumstances was he likely to have got on well with his subject, for he had met the poet in an unbalanced state of mind, determined not to like him, and yet desirous of learning what manner of man he was. Since their intercourse, such as it was, appears to have begun about the year 1840, and to have been renewed, perhaps, in 1842, I will quote here a few of Carlyle's most vigorous lines:

"His works I knew; but never considerably reverenced,—could not, on attempting it. A man recognizably of strong intellectual powers, strong character; given to meditation, and much contemptuous of the *un*meditative world and its noisy nothingnesses; had a fine limpid style of writing and delineating, in his small way; a fine limpid vein of melody, too, in him (as of an honest rustic *fiddle*, good, and well handled, but *wanting* two or more of the *strings*, and not capable of much!)—in fact, a rather dull, hard-tempered, unproductive and almost wearisome kind of man; not adorable, by any means, as a great Poetic Genius, much less as the Trismegistus of such; whom only a select few could even read, instead of misreading, which was the opinion his

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worshippers confidently entertained of him! Privately I had a real respect for him withal, founded on his early Biography, which Wilson of Edinburgh had painted to me as of antique greatness, signifying: 'Poverty and Peasanthood, then; be it so. But we consecrate ourselves to the muses, all the same, and will proceed on those terms, Heaven aiding!' This, and what of faculty I did recognize in the man, gave me a clear esteem of him, as of one remarkable and fairly beyond common:—not to disturb which, I avoided speaking of him to his worshippers; or, if the topic turned up, would listen with an acquiescing air. But to my private self his divine reflections and unfathomabilities seemed stinted, scanty; palish and uncertain;—perhaps in part a feeble *reflex* (derived at second hand through Coleridge) of the immense German fund of such?—and I reckoned his Poetic Storehouse to be far from an opulent or well-furnished apartment."

Two things are to be noted in this passage: that Wordsworth, like many another great man, had been badly served by his "worshippers"; and that Carlyle's attention had been drawn—by them probably, rather than by his own unaided eyes—to Wordsworth's very human moralizings and profundities, rather than to his truly divine simplicities and veracities. That Carlyle knew how to appreciate these when he discovered them, we learn a few pages later, and the interesting point is that he found them in the man and his talk, while saying nothing about the poems of early date in which they abound. He had seen Wordsworth as early as 1836, but the decisive meeting, he thought, was at a breakfast given by Sir Henry Taylor at a tavern in St. James's Street one summer morning, in 1840 perhaps. To this we owe the following unforgettable description of "the robust veteran man":

"He talked well in his way; with veracity, easy brevity and force; as a wise tradesman would of his tools and workshop,—as no unwise one could. His voice was good, frank and sonorous, though practically clear, distinct and forcible, rather than melodious; the tone of him business-like, sedately confident, no discourtesy, yet no anxiety about being courteous; a fine,

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wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes, sat well on the stalwart veteran, and on all he said and did. You would have said he was a usually taciturn man; glad to unlock himself, to audience sympathetic and intelligent, when such offered itself. His face bore marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation; the look of it not bland or benevolent, so much as close, impregnable and hard; a man *multa tacere loquive paratus*, in a world where he had experienced no lack of contradictions as he strode along! The eyes were not very brilliant, but they had a quiet clearness; there was enough of brow, and well shaped; rather too much of cheek (' horse-face,' I have heard satirists say), face of squarish shape and decidedly longish, as I think the head itself was (*its* length going *horizontal*): he was large-boned, lean, but still firm-knit, tall, and strong-looking when he stood: a right good old steel-grey figure, with a fine rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a veracious *strength* looking through him," etc.

On this and other visits of Wordsworth to London Carlyle saw him a number of times. The thing happened which in these last years almost invariably happened: his interlocutor put Wordsworth upon the comparative merits of poets, and was shocked to find that he spoke with limited praise even of the best, while hinting that he himself was transcendent and unlimited. An extraordinarily curious statement occurs in Carlyle's sketch. He says Wordsworth " had been in France in the earlier or secondary stage of the Revolution; had witnessed the struggle of *Girondins* and *Mountain*, in particular the execution of Gorsas, ' the first *Deputy* sent to the Scaffold '; and testified strongly to the ominous feeling which that event produced in everybody, and of which he himself still seemed to retain something: ' Where will it *end*, when you have set an example in *this* kind ?' I knew well about Gorsas; but had found, in my readings, no trace of the public emotion his death excited; and perceived now that Wordsworth might be taken as a true supplement to my Book, on this small point." As he had only recently, in 1837, finished his " French Revolution," it seems unlikely that Carlyle would have confused the name of Gorsas with another;

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but Gorsas was guillotined October 7, 1793, and Wordsworth had returned to England before the execution of the King, in January. Either Carlyle was mistaken in his report, or Wordsworth, as I have sometimes surmised, made, between 1792 and 1802, a visit to France of which the traces have disappeared.

Carlyle was deeply impressed with the "sagacity, distinctness, and credibility of Wordsworth's little biographic portraitures" of noted men in England of the Revolutionary and the subsequent time "Never," he declares, "or never but once, had I seen a stronger intellect, a more luminous and veracious power of insight, directed upon such a survey of fellow-men and their contemporary journey through the world. A great deal of Wordsworth lay in the mode and tone of drawing; but you perceived it to be faithful, accurate, and altogether lifelike, though Wordsworthian." He speaks, too, of Wordsworth's "rock-like indifference to the babble" at dinner-parties; his silence, or, when he chose to speak, "the braced rustic vivacity, willingness, and solid precision," which rang long afterwards in the listener's ear.

In July, 1842, Wordsworth resigned the office of stamp-distributor which he had held for nearly thirty years, in favour of his son William, who had acted under him for more than a third of that time. He thus surrendered the direct use of over £400, or more than half his income. But negotiations, in which he himself, Lord Lonsdale, W. E. Gladstone, and Lord Monteagle, were active, had been in progress for several weeks, with the object of securing a pension on the Civil List. It seems to have been chiefly through Gladstone's exertions that these attempts succeeded. Wordsworth's letter of thanks to him is interesting. It is dated October 17, 1842, and runs:

"I do not lose a moment in letting you know that Sir Robert Peel has made me an offer of a pension of £300 per annum for my life, and in terms which have above measure enhanced the satisfaction I feel upon the occasion. I will not run the risk of offending you by a

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renewal of thanks for your good offices in bringing this about, but will content myself with breathing sincere and fervent good wishes for your welfare."

Peel's letter to Wordsworth of August 7,* indicating his willingness to comply with the request, contains a sentence that could not have been more gracious: "It is some compensation for the severe toil and anxiety of public life to have, occasionally, the opportunity of serving or gratifying those who are an honour to their country." The letter in which the offer was finally made is as follows:

"WHITEHALL,
"*Oct.* 15, 1842.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I trust you will permit me to exercise in your favour a privilege which office confers, and which will, so exercised, give to its possessor unalloyed satisfaction

"It is my duty to recommend to Her Majesty the appropriation of a limited sum which Parliament has placed at the disposal of the Crown, on the condition that it shall be applied to the reward and encouragement of public service or of eminent literary or scientific merit.

"The total amount which I have free from absolute engagement does not exceed six hundred pounds per annum, and I feel convinced that I cannot apply a moiety of that sum in a manner more in accordance with the spirit and intentions with which the grant to the Crown has been made, than by placing (with your sanction) your honoured name on the Civil List, for an annual provision of three hundred pounds, to endure during your life.

"I need scarcely add that the acceptance, by you, of this mark of favour from the Crown, considering the grounds on which it is proposed, will impose no restraint upon your perfect independence, and involve no obligation of a personal nature.

"Believe me, my dear Sir, with true esteem,
"Most faithfully yours,
"ROBERT PEEL."

On March 24, 1843, Wordsworth wrote to Lieutenant-General Sir William Gomm:†

* "Memoirs," II. 393.

† *Ibid.*, 399.

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"Yesterday I went over to Keswick to attend the funeral of my excellent friend, Mr. Southey. His genius and abilities are well known to the world, and he was greatly valued for his generous disposition and moral excellence. His illness was long and afflicting; his mind almost extinguished years before the breath departed."

Ten days after Southey's death Wordsworth received a letter from the Lord Chamberlain informing him that, with the Queen's approval, the Laureateship was offered to him. The aged poet expressed his gratification, but replied:

"The appointment, I feel, however, imposes duties which, far advanced in life as I am, I cannot venture to undertake, and therefore must beg leave to decline the acceptance of an offer that I shall always remember with no unbecoming pride."

Thereupon the Lord Chamberlain and Sir Robert Peel both assured him that no duties were expected of him. Sir Robert Peel wrote:

"The offer was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection."

His apprehension lest he might be required to write annual and birthday odes being thus removed, Wordsworth, on April 4, 1843, accepted the honour. He wrote nothing *ex officio*, for the "Ode on the Installation of Prince Albert as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge," which was sung at the attendant ceremonies in June, 1847, was not composed by him.

The first royal command was of a different kind, and was disobeyed. Edward Quillinan, in a letter to Robinson, of July 23, wrote:

"Mr. Wordsworth ought to have been at Buckingham Palace, at the Queen's ball, for which he received a

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formal invitation. . . . He pleaded, as an apology for non-attendance, the non-arrival of the invitation in time. . . . But a man in his seventy-fourth year would, I suppose, be excused by Royalty for not travelling three hundred miles to attend a dance, even if a longer notice had been given; though probably Mr. Wordsworth would have gone, had he had a fortnight to think of it, because the laureate must pay his personal respects to the Queen sooner or later, and the sooner the better, he thinks."

Robinson's winter visit to Rydal in 1842-43 was marked by much theological discussion with Faber, who was in the neighbourhood. Wordsworth, being drawn into the debates, "denied transubstantiation," and "declared, in strong terms, his disbelief in eternal punishment." Robinson wrote to his brother, January 29, 1843, that the great poet was "in an excellent frame of mind, being both in high health and good spirits, and not over-polemical in his ordinary conversation."

"The Church," he went on, "as you are aware, is now, much more than Religion, the subject of general interest; and the Puseyites are the body who are now pushing the claim of Church Authority to a revolting excess. The poet is a High Churchman, but luckily does not go all lengths with the Oxford School. He praises the Reformers (for they assume to be such) for inspiring the age with deeper reverence for antiquity and a more cordial conformity with ritual observances, as well as a warmer piety; but he goes no further. Nevertheless, he is claimed by them as *their* poet; and they have published a selection from his works, with a preface, from which one might infer he went all lengths with them. . . . Last year we had with us an admirable and most excellent man—Dr. Arnold, whom the poet was on doctrinal points forced to oppose, though he was warmly attached to him. Instead of him we have this year a sad fanatic of an opposite character. . . . This is Faber, the author of a strange book lately published—"Lights, etc., in Foreign Lands." He is a flaming zealot for the new doctrines. . . . He and I spar together on all occasions. . . . You are aware that here I am considered as a sort of Advocatus Diaboli."

In the summer of 1843 Wordsworth spent much time with the Quillinans at The Island, Windermere, thus

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missing a visit from the German historian Ranke. The next winter Robinson came earlier than usual to Rydal. He found the poet "in great force, and in great vigour of mind," and still fond of walking in all weather. He had just completed an epitaph on Southey, to be placed in Crosthwaite church at Keswick. The household, including Miss Fenwick, were all reading Harriet Martineau's "Life in the Sick-Room." "When I said *all* the Rydalites," Robinson remarks, "I ought to have excepted poor dear Miss Wordsworth, who could not bear sustained attention to any book, but who would be quite capable of appreciating a little at a time." Robinson during this visit described, in a letter to his brother, the poet's faithful and efficient servant, James, who had been for many years a member of the Wordsworth household. The poet was indebted to him for many comforts and much leisure.

Though it cannot be denied that the details of Wordsworth's family life, of his intercourse with the world, and of his opinions on public questions, became relatively unimportant in these years of his serene and prosperous old age, a perennial interest attaches to the scanty poetical harvest which, the season permitting, he still garnered. It was no mere gleaning of neglected corn, but a new harvest, though small. He wrote eleven sonnets in 1838, including the two already mentioned, in which he denounced the ballot. One, beginning "Son of my buried Son," was addressed to an imagined grandson left destitute through lack of protection by a proper copyright law. His opposition to science as a supposed menace to love and meekness bursts forth in a sonnet "To the Planet Venus, upon its approximation (as an Evening Star) to the Earth." He will not permit undevout astronomers to monopolize the edification to be derived from such an event. A far more beautiful poem, and, indeed, one of his best, and thoroughly characteristic of that real humility and piety which were always a part of his nature whether he used the customary language of religious meditation or not, is the sonnet, beginning "Life with yon Lambs, like day, is just

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begun." The old gift of observation is still his. Who but he or Blake would have noted how the lambs gambol

> Each with his shadow at his side,
> Varying its shape, wherever he may run ?

In 1839 and 1840 he composed a series of fourteen sonnets (fifteen if we include the one addressed to Americans) on the singular subject of capital punishment. Parliament had recently reduced the list of offences punishable with death, which had formerly included a large number of crimes for which a few weeks' imprisonment is now the utmost penalty. Some members of the House of Commons favoured a further reduction, so that murder and treason should be the only capital offences. Wordsworth, as is usual with persons of a theoretical and highly dogmatic character, was accustomed to judge all proposed changes by what he thought would happen in consequence of the same tendency being carried to its logical extreme. He was utterly un-English in his inability to allow for the modifications which compromise and vicissitude cause in human affairs. His sonnets against the abolition of capital punishment were a clog upon a course of sound and greatly needed legislation. They operated, if they had any practical result, against specific reforms which he himself probably would have approved, had not his vision of ultimate consequences excited his fears. What he dreaded was that before long the death penalty for murder might be changed to imprisonment, and at length all the terrors of the law mitigated until the distinction between right and wrong became obscured. His old friend Basil Montagu was one of the most persevering advocates of the reform, which was in part effected. The sonnets do more honour to Wordsworth's courage than to his political sense. His argumentation is of a very high order, and it would be unjust to charge him with inhumanity. As to the poetical quality of the work, I think it may be said truly that more of it has never been displayed on a subject so incapable of rewarding its exercise. The sonnets serve, moreover,

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to show us more startlingly than any other of his writings, what a large place in Wordsworth's outlook was now held by belief in the immortality of the soul. What does it matter, he seems to say, whether life be long or short, happily or painfully ended, if the soul is fit for eternity? To minds like his, reform, when insisted upon with much eagerness, appears a dangerous concession to materialism. Why seek happiness and equal justice in this world, when the only important life is yet to come?

The fourteen sonnets were originally printed in the December number of *The Quarterly Review*, 1841, in an essay on "The Sonnets of William Wordsworth," by Sir Henry Taylor. The remaining one, "Men of the Western World," was occasioned by reports of lynching in America, which seemed to confirm Wordsworth's view that relaxation of the law, through the working of sentimentality or of democratic ideas, tended to bring about a terrible anarchic reaction. He also hinted at the movement in certain States of the Union to repudiate public debts. This charge he afterwards withdrew, so far as Pennsylvania was concerned, though it was repeated in another poem in 1845.

The product of 1840 was very slight. It includes the sonnet on Haydon's portrait of the Duke of Wellington, already mentioned, a longer poem on the herb called "Poor Robin," and two sonnets to Miss Gillies, who visited Rydal Mount to make a miniature portrait of the poet and another of Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth together. The second of these sonnets is a touching and well-deserved tribute to Mrs. Wordsworth's "large heart and humble mind." He also composed in 1840 two sonnets for Miss Fenwick, to express the gratitude both he and Mrs. Wordsworth felt for the friendship with which she gladdened their declining years. Only one poem, an epitaph for the Rev. Owen Lloyd, son of Charles Lloyd, is assigned to 1841. Twenty-seven, however, are supposed to have been composed in 1842. Among them are several, notably "The Norman Boy" and "The Poet's Dream," which show at last definite signs of mental

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decline. On the other hand, the three sonnets, "In Allusion to various recent Histories and Notices of the French Revolution," are full of his old strength. He appears, curiously enough, to have regarded Carlyle as an apologist for the Revolution, and attacks his work because of that misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the sonnet beginning "Who ponders National Events shall find" is memorable for its high political morality, being a protest against the evil philosophy that has wrecked half a world. Wordsworth maintains that no considerations of political "necessity" can rightly be held to supersede the universal dictates of morality which are provided for the conduct of individuals.

In some of the other pieces he dwells on scenes and incidents connected with his home, but without that generalizing touch which made the little orchard at Dove Cottage a resting-place for all gentle hearts.

For 1843 we have only the Inscription for Southey's monument in Crosthwaite church, a rather mechanical sonnet to the poet's nephew, the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, D.D., Master of Harrow School, and another equally commonplace, which begins "While beams of orient light shoot wide and high."

For three more years he continued, with remarkable alertness, to compose occasional poems, called forth in most cases by public events. Out of four poems assigned to 1844 two were sonnets directed against the proposed invasion of the Lake country by a railway. One on the same subject followed in 1845, with seven or eight other pieces. About a dozen, including an address to the Queen, written on the fly-leaf of a copy of his poems presented to her, were composed in 1846. Here the long record closes. It covers sixty years.

The personal happenings of the last seven years of Wordsworth's life, apart from his conversations with distinguished visitors, need not be minutely chronicled. He was much gratified by the glowing dedication to him of Keble's Oxford lectures on poetry—in Latin, entitled "Prælectiones Academicæ"—in 1844. He worked hard, but as his son-in-law said, to very little purpose,

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trying to mend the versification of "The Excursion." He corresponded with W. E. Gladstone on the subject of the latter's "State and Prospects of the Church," showing strong sympathy with the High Church party, and at the same time a horror for Romanism, based, he declared, upon observations he had made in countries where it was dominant. On his seventy-fourth birthday upwards of three hundred children and nearly half as many adults assembled in the grounds of Rydal Mount to do him honour. There were tables set in the open air and music, dancing, and feasting. In a letter to Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia,* he comments as follows on this event:

"I must own I wish that little commemorations of this kind were more common among us. It is melancholy to think how little that portion of the community which is quite at ease in their circumstances have to do in a *social* way with the humbler classes. They purchase commodities of them, or they employ them as labourers, or they visit them in charity for the sake of supplying their most urgent wants by almsgiving. But this, alas! is far from enough; one would wish to see the rich mingle with the poor, as much as may be, upon a footing of fraternal equality."

He was obliged to decline an invitation to be present at the great Burns festival of that year, which, though it had a more national character, could not have been more appropriate than this pretty gathering of dalesmen and their children. He spent part of the summer at Flimby, on the Cumberland coast, and in September went for a tramp through the Duddon valley with the Quillinans and one of his neighbours, Lady Richardson. Later in the autumn he and Mrs. Wordsworth were at Cambridge as guests of the Master of Trinity, Dr. Whewell, successor to Christopher Wordsworth.

They were at home again for the opening of winter and Crabb Robinson's annual visit. The diarist was at this time carrying on a campaign in favour of a bill for the relief of Unitarians from certain civil disabilities, and held on this subject many lively debates with the poet,

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 302.

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who of course opposed the measure. Under date of June 24, he tells of writing to Mrs. Fletcher, one of Wordsworth's friends and neighbours, giving her an account of the bill. "I ventured to remark," he says, "on the single defect of Wordsworth's character. He has lost his love of liberty—not his humanity, but his confidence in mankind." In December he found that Wordsworth characteristically thought that if these religious disputes continued a civil war was likely to be the result. "Wordsworth," he declared, "like most other of the orthodox, has an unreasonable dislike to Unitarians, but really knows very little about them. I have, however, told him that I am now a member of the Unitarian Association, and he receives this kindly, for he really has no bitterness about him."

It appears to have been during Robinson's visit in 1844, and near the end of December, that Wordsworth published, at Kendal, his pamphlet entitled "Kendal and Windermere Railway: Two Letters Reprinted from the Morning Post," in which he argued against the proposed invasion. Robinson, as might have been expected, took the other side and "sparred" with the poet, maintaining that the railway would be a benefit to the humbler classes, greater than the inconvenience to the residents of the region, and that Wordsworth himself had done more than anyone else to make the Lakes famous, even publishing a Guide. In his more favourable estimate of the probable character and behaviour of the visitors who would come from the great towns of the North, Robinson proved a truer prophet than Wordsworth. It may not be sound Wordsworthian doctrine, but, nevertheless, it is probably true that natural beauty has no existence in itself, and lives only in the eyes of human beholders. The more these can be multiplied the better, even if, to some extent, short of actual defacement, the conditions of the beauty are sometimes impaired.

Aubrey de Vere, writing to Henry Taylor from Ambleside in March, 1845,* said that in intercourse with

* "Correspondence of Henry Taylor," p. 155.

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Wordsworth he was reminded of the perpetual youth that belongs to true excellence:

"He speaks with as fresh an enthusiasm on all the subjects which present themselves to his moral or poetic sympathies as he would have felt when he first came to these mountains. . . . The Old Man of the Mountains is as strong as ever in body and in soul. I have seen a great deal of him, and listened to more wisdom than could be extracted from all the conversation going on in London for a week together. We have toiled up the mountain-sides, and he has murmured like a young pine-grove for hours together, and not been the least tired. It is one of the wonders of the world to hear him talk over his own poetry, and give you its secret history. I verily believe that not an object he ever saw or sound he ever heard has been lost upon him."

Under date of April 25, 1845, Robinson writes: "Called on Wordsworth at Moxon's. The Poet Laureate is come on purpose to attend the Queen's Ball, to which he has a special invitation, and for which he has come up 300 miles. He goes from Rogers's this evening, with sword, bag-wig, and court dress." As we are told that his accoutrements were borrowed from Rogers, who was short and stout, he must have presented an amazing spectacle. The emotion caused in the soul of Mrs. Everett, the wife of the American minister, when she beheld a tall elderly gentleman, to her unknown, kneeling in this plight to kiss the Queen's hand, was probably not one of awe precisely, though Wordsworth seems to have thought so. His account of the affair, in a letter to Professor Reed, dated July 1, 1845, is delicious for its unconscious humour:

"The reception given me by the Queen at her ball was most gracious. Mrs. Everett, the wife of your minister, among many others, was a witness to it, without knowing who I was. It moved her to the shedding of tears. This effect was in part produced, I suppose, by American habits of feeling, as pertaining to a republican government. To see a gray-haired man of seventy-five years of age kneeling down in a large assembly to kiss the hand of a young woman is a sight

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for which Institutions essentially democratic do not prepare a spectator of either sex, and must naturally place the opinions upon which a Republic is founded, and the sentiments which support it, in strong contrast with a government based and upheld as ours is. I am not, therefore, surprised that Mrs. Everett was moved, as she described herself as being to persons of my acquaintance, among others, to Mr. Rogers, the poet."*

In the same letter he goes on to remark that Rogers and the Rev. W. Bowles were distinguished as poets when he was yet a schoolboy.

" I saw Tennyson," he says, " when I was in London, several times. He is decidedly the first of our living poets, and I hope will live to give the world still better things. You will be pleased to hear that he expressed in the strongest terms his gratitude to my writings. To this I was far from indifferent, though persuaded that he is not much in sympathy with what I should myself most value in my attempts, viz., the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances."

On September 23 Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth left home to visit the Hutchinsons at Brinsop Court, intending to view the restoration of York Cathedral and Mr. James Marshall's factory at Leeds, on their return journey. During this absence they learned of Mrs. Coleridge's death. From Rydal Mount on December 6 Wordsworth wrote a farewell letter to Joseph Cottle, one of the few remaining associates of his youth, saying:

" And now let me bid you affectionately good-bye, with assurance that I do and shall retain to the last a remembrance of your kindness and of the many pleasant and happy hours which, at one of the most interesting periods of my life, I passed in your neighbourhood and in your company."

The shadows were thickening. His daughter-in-law had been obliged to go, with her six children, in search of health, first to Madeira and then to Italy, where she

* " Memoirs " II. 420.

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lost a son five years old. Christopher Wordsworth, the late master of Trinity, was in an alarming state of health. The eldest son of Richard Wordsworth was dying at Ambleside. Crabb Robinson, cheerful and bustling as usual, came to lighten the gloom at Christmas, however, for as Quillinan said: "No Crabb, no Christmas." He mingled with all the circle, "the Wordsworths, Fletchers, Arnolds, and Martineaus, in a variety of combinations." It was during this visit that he picked up the following well-known story: "Wordsworth related a pretty anecdote of his cook-maid. A stranger, who was shown about the grounds, asked to see his *study*. The servant took him to the library, and said: 'This is master's *library*, but he *studies* in the fields.'"

The arrival of Harriet Martineau as a permanent resident in Ambleside broke the monotonous chorus of what she described as blue-stocking and clerical admirers of the poet. It is a fact that for some reason he was regarded in certain circles as a saint-like personage, who had established some profound and mystical defence of the faith. Miss Martineau, who had a quick insight into character, and who valued ideas by a scale totally different from the support they lent to the Christian system, saw him with a truer eye than anyone else who has described him in his last years. Even the utmost kindliness of intention falls short of its effect unless the freedom and irony of criticism go with it. It is here that Miss Martineau had an advantage over Wordsworthians of the neighbourhood. She reports gratefully* that Wordsworth, at the age of seventy-five, came to encourage her, when as a hard-working woman striving to make a living by her pen, and much abhorred for her heresies, she was trying to improve the grounds about her newly-built house.

"It was," she says, "one of the pleasures of my walks for the first few years of my residence here, to meet with Wordsworth when he happened to be walking and taking his time on the road. In winter he was to be seen in his cloak, his Scotch bonnet, and green

* Harriet Martineau's "Autobiography," II. 235.

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goggles, attended perhaps by half a score of cottagers' children,—the youngest pulling at his cloak or holding by his trousers, while he cut ash-switches out of the hedge for them. After his daughter's death, I seldom saw him except in his phaeton or when I called. He gave way sadly (and inconsiderately as regarded Mrs. Wordsworth) to his grief for his daughter's loss, and I heard that the evenings were very sad. Neither of them could see to read by candle-light; and he was not a man of cheerful temperament nor of much practical sympathy."

Wordsworth's brother Christopher died at Buxted, Sussex, February 2, 1846. In this year the poet was nominated for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University, and received a majority of twenty-one in the election, but the subrector's vote outweighed these, and Lord John Russell was elected, to Wordsworth's satisfaction, as he would not have cared to appear in public and make a speech. This winter Robinson's visit was postponed until January. He mentions a meeting with Wordsworth in London on April 26. In January, 1847, the poet's younger son William married Miss Fanny E. Graham, of Brighton.

The greatest affliction of Wordsworth's life fell upon him on July 10, 1847, when he lost his much-beloved daughter. From this blow he never recovered. It broke his heart. Henceforth he made little use of the remarkably strong physical health which was still his; to him the day was dark, his strength lodged with him useless. He sank into a melancholy distressing to those about him, from which he appeared to make no efforts to extricate himself. In the spring of 1845 the Quillinans had gone to Portugal, partly for the sake of Mrs. Quillinan's health, and partly because Mr. Quillinan was interested in the literature of that country. They returned in the summer of 1846 and took a house, Loughrigg Holm, on the opposite side of the valley from Rydal Mount. But it soon became evident that she could not live long. Her lively, happy disposition had for many years been the brightest element of the poet's household. She had known how to *play* with him and

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make him cheerful against his will. Her accomplishments and graces, her charm and beauty, had perhaps formed the chief tie which bound him to this life. By opposing and delaying her marriage he demanded of her a greater sacrifice than he had a right to ask, and this thought must have been the chief ingredient of the bitter cup which he now insisted on draining to the last drop. She left a record of her travels in a book entitled "A Journal of a few months' Residence in Portugal, and Glimpses of the South of Spain," 1847.

Her death was not unexpected. A letter from Mrs. Arnold to Robinson on June 1, 1847, shows how prolonged was the pain of separation.

"Dear Mr. Wordsworth comes forth occasionally to see his old friends, and yesterday morning, when I saw him slowly and sadly approaching by our birch-tree, I hastened to meet him, and found that he would prefer walking with me around our garden boundary to entering the house and encountering a larger party. So we wandered about here, and then I accompanied him to Rydal, and he walked back again with me through the great field, as you can so well picture to yourself. This quiet intercourse gave me an opportunity of seeing how entirely our dear friends are prepared to bow with submission to God's will. No one can tell better than yourself how much they will feel it, for you have had full opportunities of seeing how completely Dora was the joy and sunshine of their lives; but, by her own composure and cheerful submission and willingness to relinquish all earthly hopes and possessions, she is teaching them to bear the greatest sorrow which could have befallen them."

The soft-hearted old man stands before us in these words. He had been a good fighter, but was naturally timid. He often wore a stern countenance, but was naturally tender and sweet. He often appeared self-conceited and opinionated, but was really a loving soul, seeking not himself but the good of others.

I have heard old Mrs. Tyson, of Rydal, who in her girlhood lived at the farm behind Rydal Mount, and later became a servant in the Wordsworth household,

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relate that when his daughter lay dying, the aged poet used to come to the farm for whey, and tell them, "You *must* make it; for if you do not my daughter will die before morning"; and she was kept alive for three weeks, Mrs. Tyson said, on whey and wine.

Mrs. Wordsworth bore the loss with greater fortitude than her husband. Mr. Quillinan, too, showed admirable courage. Some say that he, some that the poet's nephew Christopher, relieved the afflicted old man of a task which he was no longer capable of performing—that is, the composition of the "Installation Ode." It has been printed among Wordsworth's works, and was given out as his at the Cambridge Commencement in July, 1847.

It was in 1843 that Wordsworth dictated to Miss Fenwick those notes which are at once so valuable and so misleading. They are often incorrect and generally disappointing. They interpret the poems of his whole lifetime from the standpoint of an old man, sorrowful, timid, and dogmatic. Robinson, in his Diary, mentions dining with Miss Fenwick in London, September 30, 1847, and says: "She spoke with great kindness of Mr. Quillinan, to whom she is going to give the notes on Wordsworth's poems which he dictated to her, for she had promised them to Mrs. Quillinan."

Mrs. Wordsworth urged Robinson not to omit his visit to Rydal this winter, but he found the afflicted father hardly able to bear even his company. James, the faithful servant, proved a better comforter, as Robinson relates in a touching anecdote: "Talked with him about his master's grief. James said: 'It's very sad, sir. He was moaning about her, and said, "Oh, but she was such a bright creature." And I said, "But don't you think, sir, that she is far brighter now than she ever was?" And then master burst into tears.'"

A visit to the neighbourhood of Cockermouth appears to have been the only occasion of Wordsworth's leaving home in 1848. At the end of the year Robinson arrived for his last visit during Wordsworth's life. He wrote to his brother, December 28, 1848: "Fox How is the head-

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quarters of Whiggery in this corner, as Rydal Mount is of High Churchism. I am held to be a sort of anomaly among the varieties of goodness here, with the *licentia loquendi* which is given to the fool of the drama, or the old bachelor and self-willed opinionist of the novel." A remark made by Robinson in this same year, 1848, has sometimes led to a misunderstanding: "I recollect once hearing Mr. Wordsworth say, half in joke, half in earnest, 'I have no respect whatever for Whigs, but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me.'" There was little or nothing of the Chartist in him when he said this, or a few years before, when it would have taken some courage to say it and been of some use to the cause of liberty. He could not justly claim to be now what he was fifty years earlier.

Emerson, in "English Traits," describes Wordsworth as he saw him in March, 1848:

"His face sometimes lighted up, but his conversation was not marked by special force or elevation. Yet perhaps it is a high compliment to the cultivation of the English generally when we find such a man not distinguished. He had a healthy look, with a weather-beaten face, his face corrugated, especially the large nose. Miss Martineau, who lived near him, praised him to me not for his poetry, but for thrift and economy; for having afforded to his country neighbours an example of a modest household, where comfort and culture were secured without any display. She said that, in his early housekeeping at the cottage where he first lived, he was accustomed to offer his friends bread and plainest fare; if they wanted anything more, they must pay him for their board. It was the rule of the house. I replied that it evinced English pluck more than any anecdote I knew."

Admirable as such sense and courage are, it is only fair to say that the Wordsworths were always hospitable, up to and even beyond their means. Dove Cottage was at times so crowded that rooms had to be found outside for guests. And furthermore, as Dorothy once wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, in the midst of a grand upheaval at Allan Bank, William was "not expected to do anything."

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GRASMERE CHURCH

From a photograph by Walmsley

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If Emerson's anecdote be true, the credit belongs to her and Mrs. Wordsworth, even more than to the head of the family.

Emerson, like everybody else, found the aged poet craggy in his judgments. He said no Scotchman could write English. He thought Tennyson " a right poetic genius, though with some affectation "; which in 1848 was as much as could be said, and was bravely spoken.

On January 6, 1849, Hartley Coleridge died. Robinson truly said, and the testimony of persons still living confirms his words, " Everybody in the valley pitied and loved him." His father's venerable friend braved the inclemency of the season to stand beside his open grave.

Writing to Miss Fenwick, who was no longer at Rydal Mount, Robinson gives an account of his visit:

" I found Mr. Wordsworth more calm and composed than I expected. Whatever his feelings may be, he appears to have them under control. I feared that the visit to the churchyard last Tuesday with Mr. Coleridge [Derwent], to fix the spot where Hartley might be interred, would overset him; but, on the contrary, I returned with him alone, and he talked with perfect self-possession. Dear Mrs. Wordsworth is what she always was: I see no change on her, but that the wrinkles of her careworn countenance are somewhat deeper. Poor Miss Wordsworth I thought sunk still further in insensibility. By-the-by, Mrs. Wordsworth says that almost the only enjoyment Wordsworth seems to feel is in his attendance on her, and that her death would be to him a sad calamity."

Quillinan wrote to Robinson, October 14, 1849:*

" You will find your old and faithful friend, the poet, pretty much as he was on your last visit. The same social cheerfulness—company cheerfulness—the same fixed despondency, uncorrected. I esteem him for both; I love him best for the latter."

In the summer of 1849 Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth made the last of their many journeys together, going to visit her brother Thomas at West Malvern. In this

* In a manuscript letter in Dr. Williams's Library.

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year and the next appeared a six-volume edition of the Poems, embodying Wordsworth's own final revision, which had cost him much labour, some of it not well spent; for his later corrections were often unfortunate.

In a letter dated April 12, 1850, Robinson writes: "The accounts from Rydal are alarming. I fear that the great poet is approaching to what will be the commencement of his fame." Up to March 12 Wordsworth had continued in good health, but on that date he took a cold, which developed into an inflammation of the pleura and the bronchial tubes. By the 20th his illness was recognized as very serious. On Sunday, April 7, his eightieth birthday, prayers were offered for him in Rydal Chapel. On Saturday, April 20, he received the Communion at the hands of his son John. His nephew, in the "Memoirs," records an incident touching in its naturalness: "On or about this day, Mrs. Wordsworth, with a view of letting him know what the opinion of his medical advisers was concerning his case, said gently to him: 'William, you are going to Dora.' He made no reply at the time, and the words seemed to have passed unheeded; indeed, it was not certain that they had even been heard. More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into the room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, 'Is that Dora?'" While the clock was striking the hour of noon, on Tuesday, April 23, 1850, he passed calmly away.

I have heard from the lips of one of the few persons now living who knew him, Miss Arnold, of Fox How, an account of that morning. "My younger sister and I," she said, "went up on the terrace of Loughrigg, and watched the windows of Rydal Mount opposite; and when the curtains were drawn down we knew Wordsworth was dead." She was one of the large number of friends and neighbours who attended the funeral, which was on Saturday, the 27th. The body was laid to rest beside the Rothay, in Grasmere churchyard.

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Dorothy Wordsworth and Mrs. Wordsworth spent their remaining years at Rydal Mount, the former never recovering her mental health, the latter strong and serene to the last. Dorothy died January 25, 1855, and Mrs. Wordsworth, January 17, 1859. Their bodies lie in the same corner of Grasmere churchyard with those of their brother and husband and of Dora Quillinan, Hartley Coleridge, the two children Thomas and Catherine, and Sara Hutchinson. There, too, stands a stone in memory of the sailor brother John.

Wordsworth's fame spread slowly during his lifetime. Since his death it has increased with sound and constant growth. His appreciative readers were confined at first to the small circle of persons who knew him or were acquainted with his purposes. Upon them the force of his character operated almost as much as the charm of his poetry. Then the best lovers of literature in the English-speaking world began to appreciate the exalted quality of his verse and the fineness of his feeling; many of the strongest minds, statesmen, philosophers, men of science, perceived and valued the truth of his report about nature and the human heart; influential critics proclaimed him the greatest poet of his age, great in the purity and elevation of his work, and no less in the peculiarly poetic view which he took of the world.

For a time this last quality of his writings was the most generally understood. Men spoke of the Wordsworthian attitude, the Wordsworthian conception of nature, and his many-sidedness was not sufficiently acknowledged. But as "The Prelude" became better known, and after the "Fragment of the Recluse" appeared, unexpected depths were revealed, his intellectual complexity and power were more fully realized, and he was thought of as something more than the simple poet of quiet nature.

His unique position as interpreting, through personal experience, one of the most tremendous political changes in history has only begun to be recognized. The French

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Revolution itself is coming to be more sympathetically understood, and Wordsworth's attitude to the Revolution is seen in a truer light.

In the crisis through which the world is now passing, his countrymen have turned to him as never before. His poems of liberty and independence impart strength and confidence in a season of bitter trial.

That Wordsworth gives serenity to those who love him is true, but he never found the way to peace himself. His soul was never at rest. He was always consumed with passionate joy or passionate distress. He will be venerated for the honesty of his work and the height of his ideals as long as our English tongue endures. He dealt seriously with poetry, honouring himself and humankind.

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